

PICTURES OF LIFE IN INDIA.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,
And Uniform with this Volume.

1. SCENES AND STORIES FROM THE LAND
OF IDOLS.
 2. HALF-HOURS WITH THE HINDUS.
-

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PICTURES OF LIFE IN INDIA:

BY

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MOHAMMEDANISM," ETC., ETC.

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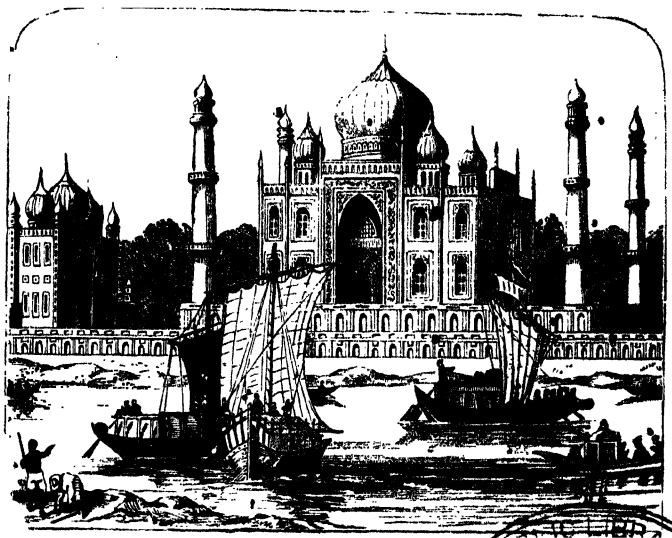
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THE TAJ MAHAL, AGRA.

I.

TALES OF THE MUTINY.

THE most momentous political event, connected with the British occupation of India was undoubtedly the Mutiny of 1857, when our very existence in the country was at peril. At that date the English had just been one hundred years in the land, and to many of the Hindus and Moham-medans it seemed a suitable time to attempt to throw off the foreign yoke.

It must not be thought that the people of India generally, what we may call the common people, were anxious to get rid of English rule. The rising against us was not a popular movement like that which over-

threw the Bourbon dynasty in France, or like that which deprived us of the colonies which have since become the United States of America. The populace of India have scarcely known anything else but subjection, for they have been "under the yoke of the stranger" almost as far back as history takes us, and at no time have they been better treated than since the British occupation of the land.

• But if it was not popular discontent that led to the Indian Rebellion, what, then, was the cause of it? The Mutiny was, there can be little doubt, due partly to the disaffection of the pampered native army, and partly to the intrigues of the unworthy Mohammedan princes whom the English had deprived of their possessions. The Moslems were really at the heart of the Rebellion, and the whole movement may be looked upon as the expiring effort of Islam to regain its lost supremacy in India.

Whatever was the cause of the Mutiny it was a time of unexampled peril to the English in the East, and forms a never-to-be-forgotten chapter in our national history. It is a subject with which my young readers ought to make themselves familiar, and I hope that what I have to say now, in relating some tales of the Mutiny, will lead to further research and study in this most interesting and important field of history on the part of all.

Great events in human life often hang on little things; and it has been gravely questioned whether the disaffection of the Moslems of Delhi and Oude, and the vague discontent of the Sepoy troops, would have culminated in a widespread rebellion against

English rule, but for the matter of what has been called "the greased cartridges."

The tale goes that towards the close of 1856, the British Government decided to replace the old musket "Brown Bess" with the new Enfield rifle, which could not, however, be easily loaded, as it was grooved, without the greasing of the cartridge. Now with what was the cartridge greased? Therein lay the germ of strife.

In January 1857, when the manufacture of the new cartridges was proceeding briskly at Dum Dum, a military station near Calcutta, a low-caste workman asked a Brahmin for a draught of water from his drinking vessel, but was indignantly refused, whereupon the workman sarcastically remarked, "Do not be so very touchy about your caste, for our masters the English will soon make high-caste and low-caste on an equality." And when asked to explain himself, the man further said that the white people had resolved to abolish all caste distinctions by smearing the new cartridges which the soldiers would have to use with beef fat and hog's lard.

Now beef fat was the abomination of the Hindus, and hog's lard of the Moslems, and when the news of the threatened outrage spread, as it did like wildfire, there was the greatest excitement, consternation, and rage throughout the length and breadth of India. It was in vain that the Government denied that such grease had ever been thought of, for neither the Hindus nor the Moslems would listen to reason, but believed the tale of the workman who had first propagated the base untruth. Thus by such an insignificant

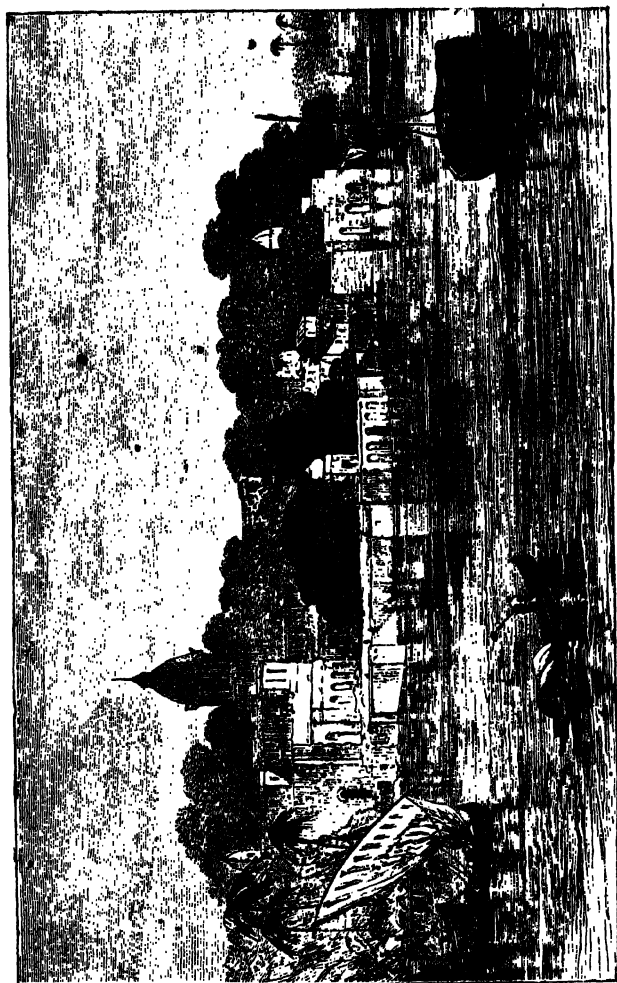
PICTURES OF LIFE IN INDIA.

thing as "grease" was the disaffection against British rule deepened and fanned into a flame of war.

Though it was not known until long afterwards, it seems that the Bengal Army, after this grease episode at Dum Dum, arranged a plot by which on May 31st, 1857, the native troops all over the empire were to break out into open revolt, murder their English officers, possess themselves of forts and strong places, and declare the British rule in India to be for ever abolished. The Mohammedans of the North-West had agreed to join in the uprising.

This well-laid scheme of a general rebellion was frustrated, however, in a remarkable way. At the military station of Meerut, about forty-two miles north-east of Delhi, there was a force of about two thousand European soldiers, and a still larger force of native troops: It was feared that many of the natives were ripe for insurrection, though no one knew for certain. The 3rd Light Cavalry was under the command of Col. C. Smyth, and this officer, out of what appears to have been a mere whim, resolved on April 24th to put his troopers to the test. He held a parade of ninety skirmishers, and ordered them to load their rifles with the new cartridge; but eighty-five of the men refused to comply, declaring that they would not touch the unclean thing.

Here was wilful insubordination, and the malcontents were at once brought before a court-martial and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment with hard labour. On Saturday, May 9th, the sentences were read out before the army on parade, and the dishonoured soldiers were put in irons and taken off to



GAWNPORE.

prison. The rest of the native troops could not stand the sight, however, and next day, in the evening, they all revolted.

The first British officer to expostulate with the men was Colonel Finnis, but they would not listen to him, and shot him down. The work of slaughter thus commenced, the soldiers rushed with yells to the gaol, and released their imprisoned comrades, with whom they flew upon the European bungalows, which they sacked and gave to the flames, murdering the inmates—men, women, and children, in their unpitied rage.

General Hewett, the commandant, was not equal to the crisis ; for though he gathered together the English troops as soon as possible, and stopped the work of slaughter at Meerut, he allowed the rebels to make good their escape to Delhi, to do further and incalculable mischief there.

However, the forcing on, as it were, of the Mutiny at Meerut before the day fixed for the general uprising, was probably the salvation of British rule in India. The rebels throughout the country did not know what to think, when news reached them of the events at Meerut on May 10th. The agreement had been broken, and now it was no longer possible to work together.

As a consequence May 31st was abandoned for the general insurrection, and the troops mutinied at different times in different places, according to the pressure of events. If the awful storm had burst on one day, who can say what would have been the result? But as it was the English were able to deal

with the rebels to some extent separately, and though the struggle was against fearful odds British valour eventually prevailed.

What tales of cruelty and of bravery reach us from Delhi, the ancient capital of India, which became the seat of the rebellion! On Monday morning, May 11th, 1857, the deserters from Meerut entered Delhi post haste, and made their appearance before the Palace of the Moghul Emperor, who was a pensioner of the British Government, announcing to the astonished monarch that they had come to make him a monarch indeed, by raising him to the sovereignty of all India in place of the British Raj.

The English had three regiments of native troops in Delhi, but these at once mutinied and joined the rebels from Meerut, and assisted in the general massacre of British officers and residents which now ensued. Mr. Simon Fraser, the Commissioner, was one of the first to die. He was shot while driving through the streets in his buggy, and his head, which was severed from his body at a stroke, was carried about on a pole in triumph.

Captain Douglas, the brave commander of the Palace Guards, was the next to fall, and then the rebels came upon the station chaplain, the Rev. W. Jennings, and his daughter. Despite the tears and shrieks of the latter, her father was slain before her eyes, and then she also was put to death, after being subjected to dreadful indignities. Miss Jennings had only lately arrived from England, and was on the eve of marriage.

In other parts of the city similar awful deeds were

being enacted, and it seemed as if every European in Delhi would be cruelly done to death. At the Arsenal, however, a short but splendid resistance was made by a few Englishmen. "This magazine contained three hundred pieces of cannon, twenty thousand stand of muskets and bayonets, two hundred thousand rounds of shot and shell, and other munitions to correspond." Lieutenants Willoughby and Forrest, and Conductors Buckley and Scully, determined to hold the Arsenal against all comers, as long as it could be held, and when no longer tenable to blow the place to atoms.

Gallantly did the brave men fight against overwhelming odds, but at length Willoughby gave the signal, Buckley repeated it, and Scully fired the magazine. A report like thunder followed, the city of Delhi was shaken, as if in the throes of an earthquake, and the magazine with all its priceless stores was a mass of ruins. Thus the rebels were balked of the spoil! Was it not an heroic deed?

About fifty ladies who had escaped the general massacre in the city, took refuge in the Palace of the Emperor, on promise of protection, which promise, however, was basely broken. The princes of the royal house kept the unhappy ladies in seclusion for four days and nights, but on the fifth day they ordered them to be taken into the great courtyard and there put to death. The victims cried piteously for mercy, but no mercy was shown them, for the king's body-guard attacked them with the sword, stabbed them, cut them down, and hewed them to pieces. It was a cowardly, dastardly, affair, and was to meet, as we shall see later, with a terrible retribution.

To relieve the awful gloom of this narrative, let me mention here an act of a very different character. Not all the Mohammedans of Delhi were given over to the general spirit of hatred of the British. Instances even of great kindness to Europeans were not unknown. For example, there is a story told of a Mrs. Leeson, who, in seeking to escape with a babe in her arms, was shot at by a trooper. The bullet killed the babe, and wounded the mother in the arm. Mrs. Leeson had the presence of mind to fall down as if dead, and on the ground she lay from seven till ten at night, not daring to move. During that time several natives passing by saw her, and, kicking her savagely, said, "It serves you right, you Christian pig! May all your race perish thus miserably!"

• At length, however, one person, a respectable Mohammedan gentleman, stopped near the suffering woman, and said in a whisper, "I see you are not dead: but do not fear, I will not hurt you. Rise up at once and come with me to my house." Something in the man's voice gave the lady hope. She arose without a word, and, after kissing tenderly her dead child, she followed her protector to a house close by, where she was kindly received by some native ladies. For three months she remained under that hospitable Moslem roof, until her new friends were afraid to keep her any longer. By their aid, however, she escaped from the city, and reached the English camp outside, for Delhi was by that time besieged by the British. And there of course she was safe from pursuit; and eventually she rejoined her husband, who also had escaped from the hands of the enemy.

And how had events fallen out elsewhere? A fearful storm of war was raging throughout all Northern India. Fortunately the native troops at Madras and Bombay, though they wavered in their allegiance, did not mutiny. If they had done so, the case would have been desperate indeed. The troubles in the North taxed to the utmost the British resources.

The troops at Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, and other places, all revolted, and frightful atrocities were perpetrated. A sad tale comes from Rohnee in the Santal district.* Sir Norman Leslie was seated in the verandah of his bungalow, conversing with two friends, Dr. Grant and Major Macdonald, when three soldiers crept up behind them, and suddenly attacked them, all unarmed as they were. Lieutenant Leslie fell pierced through the back by a sword. His dying words were, "What will become of my poor wife and children?" Dr. Grant was seriously wounded and disabled. Major Macdonald was thus left to contend alone with three fierce assailants. Snatching up a chair he stood on his guard, but a blow reached his forehead and nearly scalped him.* With the blood dripping from the frightful wound, and almost blinding him, he still stood at bay however, and rushing at his assailants belaboured them with the chair until they lost heart and fled. It was an extraordinary spectacle, and never perhaps was a chair used in a life and death struggle to better purpose.

A few days afterwards Major Macdonald discovered the three soldiers, and had them put in irons. Their guilt being proved, they were publicly hanged as a

warning to the rest of the troopers, who were thoroughly cowed by the determined action of the gallant major. Thus at Rohnee the mutineers did not get the upper hand.

At Benares, too, prompt measures saved the city from being sacked. There were only two hundred European troops to face two thousand native troops, when the latter mutinied. However, the Europeans had three pieces of cannon, and when the natives charged them, they were received by a shower of grape-shot. Three times did the Sepoys charge up to the very muzzles of the cannon, but the Europeans stood firm and drove them back. Darkness had now fallen, but Colonel Spottiswood took a torch and set fire to the soldiers' huts, so that they might have light to fight by, and thus the struggle was carried on until the native troops fled in dismay.

Colonel Neill, who was in command of the Europeans, acted with promptitude and decision, in having the country round about scoured by his men. While this was being done a telegram arrived from the Viceroy, Lord Canning, commanding the Colonel to march to Allahabad; but the determined man telegraphed back, "Can't do it: wanted here." And at Benares he remained until he felt sure the city was safe from the mutineers.

Less fortunate was Sir Hugh Wheeler at Cawnpore, who also had only two hundred Europeans to oppose to a large force of Natives. This officer unhappily trusted to the friendship of the infamous Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the late Ex-Peishwa of the Mahrattas. Nana had an intense hatred for the English, though he

pretended to be their best friend. However, his true character was revealed on June 5th, when the whole of the native troops at Cawnpore mutinied, and the Prince placed himself at their head. The traitor unfurled two standards: one was announced as that of Mohammed, and the other of Hanuman the monkey-god. Around the first the Mussulmans gathered, and around the second the Hindus.

Sir Hugh Wheeler, with his two hundred soldiers, had not only to hold his position, but to protect three hundred and thirty women and children. He formed an entrenchment at the south-east extremity of the cantonment, and held his ground bravely from the 5th to the 27th of June, against the hordes that attacked him. The spot had been badly chosen, however, for a long siege, and at length he agreed to terms of surrender.

Sir Hugh promised to give up all the stores, money, and guns in the entrenchment; and Nana Sahib solemnly swore not only to allow the garrison to retire unmolested, but to provide means of conveyance for the women and children. On the morning of the 27th the Europeans left the entrenchment and went down to the riverside to embark in the boats provided for their escape. They were permitted to embark, and then, as Marshman says, "was perpetrated one of the most diabolical acts of treachery and murder that the darkest page of human annals records."

. A bugle suddenly sounded, and that was the signal for two guns which had been concealed to open fire with grape-shot upon the Europeans. Terrible was

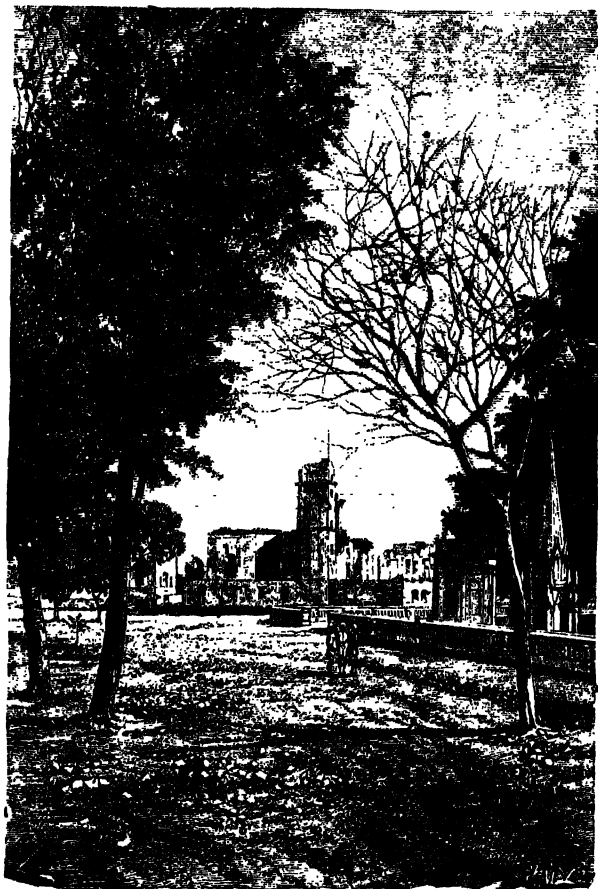
the execution done. The boats were sunk, and numbers perished either from the shot, or from the swords of the rebels, who rode their horses into the stream after them, or from drowning. Still a number of both sexes reached the shore, and then the terrible Nana gave the order that all the men should be killed, but that the women and children should be preserved alive, and taken to his residence for the time being. Sir Hugh Wheeler was the first to fall. Only two officers and two privates eluded the enemy. These men, being magnificent swimmers, managed to get across the river, and after further hair-breadth escapes reached a place of safety.

And what fate befell the helpless women and children? Ah, it is known to all the world! There were two hundred and six of them, and they were placed in a small building not much larger than the Black Hole of Calcutta, and there for a fortnight they remained in the burning heat of an Indian summer.

At the end of that time they found release: but it was the release of death. They were butchered in cold blood. Oh, how could the Nana order their destruction! And how could the soldiers execute the commands of their fierce lord! Thus to slay women and children was to sink to the level of the brute! And when the awful deed was done, the bodies of the slain were thrown into a neighbouring well—a well of sacred memories henceforth.

Not far from Cawnpore is Lucknow, the capital city of Oude, a stronghold of the Mohammedans, and there the storm of war raged fiercely. It was on the

evening of May 30th that the troops mutinied in



RUINS OF THE RESIDENCY, LUCKNOW.

Lucknow ; but the wise and gallant Sir Henry Lawrence, who was in command, was ready for the

event, and did all that man could do to nip the insurrection in the bud, but without avail. When he was overpowered by numbers he retired into the Residency, which he had already prepared to stand a siege.

The Residency was simply a large three-storied house, of not more than average strength, and never intended to be a place of refuge in time of war. However, Sir Henry Lawrence had laid in great stores of provision and ammunition against the evil day which he saw was sure to come; and when the storm broke he gathered his little band of nine hundred European soldiers and four hundred and fifty women and children within the walls of the Residency, resolved to make a brave stand against the foe. It is only fair to record also that six or seven hundred native troops proved faithful, and remained with the British, resisting all the entreaties of their comrades, who had mutinied, to desert.

The garrison by which the Residency was defended, therefore, must be put down at sixteen hundred; but against this force was arrayed an army which has been reckoned at not less than fifty thousand, and most of them trained soldiers. The odds were fearful; but Sir Henry Lawrence was undismayed, and imparted courage and resolution to the whole garrison, so that the little band of noble hearts fought and held their ground with almost unexampled courage, week after week, and month after month, waiting for the coming of a rescue party, which they firmly believed the Viceroy would send when he heard of their desperate condition.

Sad to say, Sir Henry Lawrence was killed within a few days of the commencement of the struggle. A shell from the guns of the foe burst in his room and shattered his thigh. His leg was amputated, but the wound proved fatal; for after lingering two or three days, during which he cheered the officers of his garrison with brave Christian words, and partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "he fell on sleep."

Almost the last words of the heroic man were, "Bury me without any fuss, and place on my tombstone these words, 'Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty. May the Lord have mercy on his soul.'"

The soldiers wept as they carried their commander to his last resting-place, and, raising the sheet which covered the face of the beloved dead, they each stooped down, and reverently kissed him on the forehead a last farewell. It was a touching sight, and would long live in the memory of those who were spared to tell the tale. What an example Sir Henry Lawrence has left to all Englishmen!

"England expects every man to do his duty!"

Before referring to the closing events of the Mutiny, I should like to call attention to the conduct of the native Christians throughout that terrible time. With scarcely an exception they remained true to their professions of faith in Christ, though greatly persecuted and sorely tried. They were not well treated even by the British Government in some places; nevertheless, they held fast by their baptismal vows.

At Agra, when on July 3rd the Europeans were

gathered into the great fort for protection from the revolted soldiery, the authorities refused admittance to the native Christians, over eight hundred in number ; but the Rev. Mr. French, the present Bishop of Lahore, and other missionaries, protested, and



SIR HENRY HAVELOCK.

that they would remain outside also if their converts were thus shamefully deserted. Then the authorities gave way ; and very glad they were afterwards that they had done so, for the native Christians proved most useful as domestic servants and soldiers for the batteries.

There is a story told of a native preacher named Thakur Dass, who lived in a village about twelve miles from Agra. When the other Christians entered the fort this good old man declined to follow them, saying. "I am an old man, and who will kill me? I will stay where I am, and trust in God." Months passed by and no one molested him; but on October 10th some low characters in the neighbourhood resolved to kill him. Calling at his house they made him prisoner, bound him with cords, and led him out to put him to death. The old man still trusted in God, and begged for a moment's respite for prayer, which being granted he prayed for his would-be murderers, and then commended his spirit to his Maker, thinking that his end was at hand. However, at that very moment a tramp of armed men was heard, and with a cry of "The English are coming!" the persecutors took to their heels and left the old man unhurt. It was not the English at all, but a number of native troops. It made no difference, however, for the aged Christian quietly made his way home unmolested; and for years afterwards told with much thankfulness the story of his almost miraculous deliverance from the very jaws of death.

At Delhi, in the general massacre, many of the native Christians perished along with the Europeans, scorning to obtain safety by apostasy. Take the case of Wallayat Ali, a preacher among the Baptists. This man was taken before some of the leading Mussulman officers, who promised that his life would be spared if he would but deny Christ and confess Mohammed; but the brave and devoted Christian answered, "No!

no ! a thousand times no ! Jesus gave His life for me, and if need be I must give my life for Him."

His trembling wife stood by while this was said, and the next moment Wallayat Ali was slain before her eyes, falling a martyr to the Name which he held to be above every name. Indian Christians have a right to be proud of such men, and to hold their memory dear ! Verily the native Christians during the days of the Mutiny witnessed a good confession, and made their calling and election sure.

With the fall of Delhi, which was besieged for many weary months by all the British troops that could be gathered together for the emergency—a mere handful compared with the numbers of the enemy—the terrible Mutiny was checked, and the beginning of the end was seen. It was in September of the year 1857 that Delhi fell. With it fell the Moghul empire for ever. •.

The dishonoured King of Delhi fled with his family to the large building, the tomb of Humayun, a few miles southward of the city ; but was followed there by the celebrated Captain Hodson, who made him prisoner, and carried him back to the palace of his ancestors to be tried for his life. The two sons and a grandson of the king were also made prisoners on the following day by the same intrepid officer.

These were the wretches who had caused the European women and children to be murdered in the courtyard of the palace at Delhi. They were sent off, under a guard, to the city ; but Captain Hodson seems to have feared a rescue, and so he took the law into his own hands, and slew his prisoners. Writing of

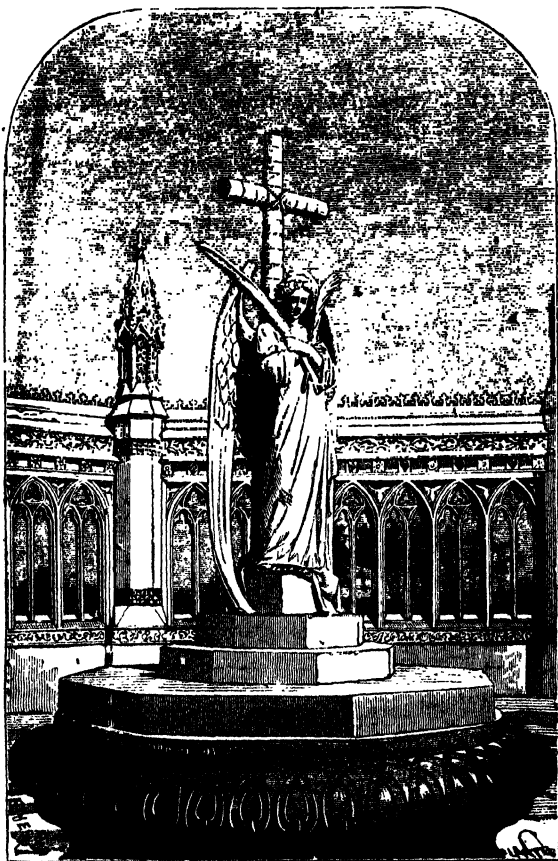
the event he says, "I came up just in time, as a large mob had collected, and were turning on the guard. I rode in among them at a gallop, and in a few words I appealed to the crowd, saying that these were the butchers who had murdered and brutally used helpless females, and that the Government had now sent their punishment; and seizing a carbine I deliberately shot them one after the other." The dead bodies of the princes were taken on to Delhi, and were exposed in the public streets as a terrible warning, and even the Moslems beholding the sight acknowledged the righteous retribution of Allah.

From Delhi the mutineers who escaped fled to Lucknow, the second great Mohammedan city of Northern India, to strengthen the hands of the rebels there.

For many weeks the brave General Havelock had been struggling against innumerable difficulties and dangers in his efforts to destroy the force of Nana Sahib at Cawnpore, and relieve Lucknow. When his victorious troops at last entered Cawnpore it was a pitiful sight they beheld. The well was found into which the victims of Nana's cruelty had been thrown. It was full to the brim of the mangled remains of the dead. "The feelings of those who witnessed the spectacle it is easy to conceive, but difficult to describe. Men of iron nerve, who had during the march from Allahabad rushed to the cannon's mouth, and unappalled had seen their comrades mowed down around them, now lifted up their voices and wept."

The well was reverently covered in, and a beautiful monument has since been erected over it to com-

memorate the fate of the hapless ladies and children,



MEMORIAL WELL, CAWNPORE.

so pitilessly murdered by the infamous Nana Sahib. There is no sadder spot on earth than the garden

at Cawnpore which contains the sepulchre of the Memorial Well.

With hearts almost breaking with sorrow the British troops pushed on to the Residency at Lucknow, which was relieved only just in time, as the brave garrison was reduced to the verge of despair. Still the rebels held the city, and even the united forces of the British were not equal to more than remaining on the defensive, until, in the month of November, Sir Colin Campbell arrived with fresh troops, and a retreat was effected of the whole garrison. It was a brilliant episode, though a gloom was cast over the escaped English by the death of the noble Havelock just outside Lucknow.

The heroic general was seized with illness brought on by his exertions and anxieties, and had no strength to resist the attack. His last words were, "I die happy and contented. I have for forty years so ruled my life, that when death came I might face it without fear."

For some time after the Relief of Lucknow the Great Rebellion prolonged its existence in different parts of the country, but both Hindus and Mohâmmedans had lost all hope of ultimate victory. At length the storm died away, and on July 8th, 1859, the Viceroy, Lord Canning, proclaimed peace throughout India. There is no prouder page in the history of England than the story of the way in which a mere handful of British troops triumphed over their foes and put down with a strong hand the Indian Mutiny.

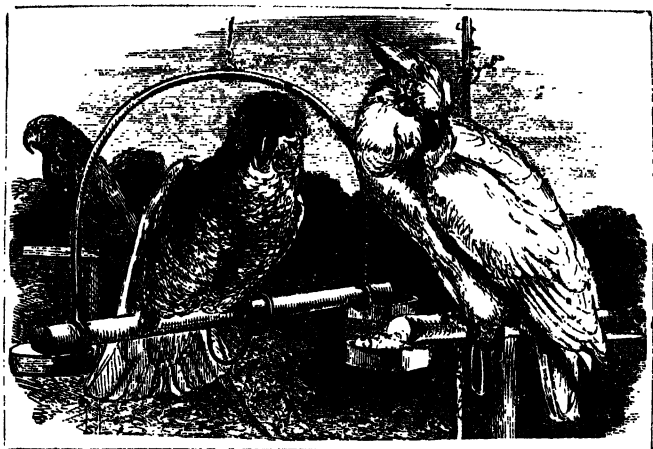
And to-day the people of India, both high and low, rejoice in the just rule of the British Imperial Govern-

ment, and are reaping the benefits of Western civilisation, which would, humanly speaking, never have been theirs, or at any rate not for centuries to come, if the Mutiny had ended otherwise than as it did.

The aim of England ought now to be to set up in the East, by peaceful means, the Kingdom of God's dear Son—a kingdom that can never be moved.



SIR COLIN CAMPBELL.



II.

SACRED BIRDS.

NO one can travel much in India without being struck with the beauty of the birds which fly about so joyously in the rays of the rising or the setting sun.

Almost every variety of birds known to ornithologists may be found in India, either on the plains or in the hill countries. The birds of the plains are perhaps more beautiful in appearance, but they are lacking in the gift of song ; and the power to sing sweetly is after all what we like best in our feathered friends.

It is not my intention in this chapter to deal with the wide subject of Indian birds in general, but only to treat of those for which the people of the East have special regard, and which they characterise as sacred.

The list is not long. Let us commence with the not very beautiful but yet substantial and useful goose. It is strange that in almost every part of the world, and in all ages, the goose has been held in reverence. It was worshipped for ages by the Egyptians, and almost worshipped by the Romans. Augustine says that the respect for the goose displayed by the Romans was due to their gratitude for the service the bird rendered them that night when the Goths attacked Rome, and would have taken the city, but for the warning cries of vigilant geese who acted well the part of watch dogs. In honour of the event, and the bird, the Romans instituted a holy day or yearly holiday, which they called "the Goose's feast."

According to Caesar, the early Britons held it sinful to eat the flesh of goose; but we think differently now, and especially at Christmas-time, as my young readers well know. The Dutch and the French in the middle ages also held the goose in veneration, believing that the Holy Spirit dwelt in the bird; and therefore they would not allow it to be killed, either in sport or for food. At the present day all superstitious reverence for the goose has died out in the West however, and we have to journey to the East to find adorers of the so-called sacred bird.

Amongst both Hindus and Buddhists the goose is regarded with feelings of religious respect: it is indeed the national emblem emblazoned on the standard of Burmah. Sir Emerson Tennent, in his well-known book on Ceylon, remarks: "Taken in connection with the proverbial contempt for the supposed stolidity of the goose, there is something still unexplained in the

extraordinary honours paid to it by the ancients, and the veneration in which it is held to-day by some of the Eastern nations. The figure that occurs so frequently on Buddhist monuments is the Brahminee goose, which is not a native of Ceylon, but from time immemorial has been the object of veneration there, and in all parts of India."

In Northern India there used to be a Buddhist monastery called the "Goose's monastery," which derived its name, so the story goes, from the self-sacrifice of a goose. It happened thus. One day, when taking exercise in the fields, just outside the monastery gates, a monk saw a flock of geese high in the air; and as he looked at them he thought what a pity it was that they were out of his reach, as he and his brethren were almost at the point of starvation owing to the scarcity of food. As he thought of their dire need, he exclaimed aloud, "Oh, geese, to-day the monks of this holy place are famishing! Will you not have compassion on our circumstances?"

No sooner had the monk thus spoken than the geese gave a cackle, which seemed to signify assent; and lo and behold one of the fattest of the flock fell dead at the feet of the suppliant! The surprised monk ran in to the monastery to tell his brethren, and they all turned out to view the bird which had given its life to appease their hunger. But none of the reverend fathers could bring himself to eat the flesh of the bird regarded as sacred to the great Lord Buddha. It seemed a sacrilege even to think of such a thing, so the dead goose was buried with all honour, and a stupa or monument erected over its body to commemorate its

self-sacrificing deed ; and the monastery thenceforward was called "The Goose's Monastery," and the sacred bird was held in greater esteem and honour than ever all over the East.

There is another curious legend told of the Brahminee goose. It is to the effect that for some indiscretion two young people who were lovers were turned into geese, and condemned to pass their nights apart from each other on the opposite banks of a river. All night long each asks in turn if it shall join its mate, and receives a reply in the negative. The female bird calls aloud, "Chakw'a, shall I come?" And the male answers, "No, Chakwi." Then the male bird says, "Chakwi, shall I come?" and receives for reply, "No, Chakwa." Thus the night through the forlorn lovers are heard calling to one another, and will call, until time shall be no more. It is the punishment of folly.

There is in India a Brahminee kite as well as a Brahminee goose, which is also held in high esteem. This is not the common or govind kite, but the white-headed bird, sometimes called the eagle of Coromandel. The Brahminee kite is considered an incarnation of the goddess Durga, and is revered by the Hindus, who bow to it with great humility every time it passes them in flight.

Even the Mohammedans regard this kite with respect, and believe that by whirling one of these birds round the head of a child on a Tuesday or a Saturday, and then letting it go, great blessings are sure to descend upon the little one. Kites, like crows, are great thieves, and sometimes carry off silver or gold

ornaments ; and Moslem women say the reason is because the young kites will not open their eyes till something precious is placed in the nest beside them. Hence the Indian proverb, "The philosopher's stone is in the kite's nest." And truly it would be a more profitable occupation searching kites' nests for gold, than seeking by alchemists' arts to turn base metal into the true thing. Of the Brahminnee kite Dr. Adams says, in his "Wanderings of a Naturalist in India": "This kite is a handsome bird of prey. Although wanting the grace and rapidity of flight of the govind-kite, it has the advantage as regards beauty and colouring of plumage. Individuals may be seen frequently swooping on fish in the river, or hovering over the shallows. The head, neck, and irides are white, the rest of the body chestnut."

The peacock is also a sacred bird. In the chapter headed "The Peacock Throne," I have already given an account of this bird, which amongst the Rajputs is held to be sacred to the war-god Kumara. The peacock is said to scream and dance with joy at the sound of thunder, just as a Rajput warrior does at the noise of the kettle drum which calls to war. This bird is also sacred to the Hindu god of beauty, who is generally represented as riding on the back of the peacock.

The peacock, like the kite, is said to be a great thief, but nevertheless it is held in high esteem and regard. It is counted a great crime, as many a sportsman has found in India to his cost, to shoot a peacock ; and yet in some parts of the North-West Provinces the bird is a great nuisance to the farmers,

who have a saying that "the monkey, the partridge, and the peacock rob the field of its store." As sacred birds, however, peacocks have a licence to rob as much as they like. Thus does religious superstition stand in the way of national prosperity in the East.

The white owl is considered sacred, though the common owl is a bird of ill omen. The white owl is believed to bring good luck, and it is considered great



WHITE OWL.

good fortune to see this bird in the daytime. The white owl is held sacred to Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity; and the people of India are delighted if an owl or owls will condescend to build in their houses. In lonely country places old houses are often infested with these birds, who establish their quarters in dark nooks and corners, and breed twice a year, producing five or six young ones at a time. The screeching and shrieking that goes on is of course

something wonderful to hear, but it is endured, and even counted sweet music, for luck's sake. The common belief is that no evil will come nigh a house where a white owl lives. Experience, however, does not justify faith in the superstition.

Perhaps the most famous of Indian sacred birds is the one styled Garuda, who is called "the King of Birds." He only exists, however, in the Hindu sacred books, and in the imagination of the people. Garuda is a mythical being, and is described as half man and half eagle. He has the head and wings of a bird, while the rest of his body is like that of a human being. He is always associated with the god Vishnu, being indeed the carrier of the god when he wishes to move from place to place.

Garuda is worshipped at the great Hindu festivals at the same time as Vishnu. His image may be found also in many temples, and he is regarded as the guardian deity of the strong and the brave, who must repeat his name daily. Garuda is represented as having done many daring and wonderful things, such as carrying in his beak a huge trunk of a tree on which some people were sitting, while with one claw he held a tortoise and with the other an elephant. Another exploit was to capture the moon and conceal it under his wing. But his most marvellous deed was entering the heavenly abode of the god Indra, and in spite of all opposition capturing the sacred Amrita, the drink of the gods. On account of these events the bird is spoken of as

"King Garud blest beyond compare
Of birds who wing the fields of air.

Are not such tales absurd? Yet the religious books of the Hindus relate them with all seriousness and at great length.

There is one story concerning Garuda the king of birds that is more sensible than the rest, and this my young readers may like to hear. It is as follows :—

On a certain day Garuda, with a friendly Brahmin priest, alighted on the peak of a mountain, where they found a celebrated female ascetic named Candili, living apart from the world, and practising all kinds of bodily mortifications. Seeing this good lady, Garuda and his friend saluted her reverently and received her blessing. Candili then asked concerning their welfare, gave them seats, and set food before them, and herself waited upon them as a servant. So kind was the hospitable lady, so amiable, and withal so beautiful, notwithstanding her fastings and other austerities, that Garuda fell in love with her, and while he should have slept that night he lay awake forming the wicked resolve to bear away the lovely lady by force, on his strong wings, next morning.

But lo ! when the day broke, the king of birds found that his wings on which he depended for flight had fallen off. And a very pitiable object he presented. When his companion the priest beheld the sad plight of his friend he was distressed ; and after expressing his sympathy, asked how it was that this evil had come to pass—"Surely thou hast been harbouring an evil thought in thy mind?" Then Garuda confessed that he had purposed the ruin of the fair lady who had treated them so graciously when they alighted on the mountain.

"Confess thy fault," said the priest, "if haply thou mayest be forgiven and regain thy proper form." Then Garuda approached their hostess Candili, expressed his contrition, and prayed for pardon, which was freely granted. The gracious lady said, "Fear not, O thou of beautiful feathers ; resume thy wings and cast off thy fears, and learn this lesson : that purity of conduct beareth virtue as its fruit—it is purity that bringeth on prosperity—it is purity that driveth away all signs of evil. Go thou whithersoever thou dost wish. Never more entertain low thoughts of me, and take care thou dost not despise women who may be truly blamable. Reverence womankind." At these words Garuda had his wings again, and they became even stronger than before, and he went on his way with a light and happy heart.

We may regard this story as a parable, and it teaches us that we lose our wings—that is our strength, and energy, and peace of mind—when we cherish unholy thoughts or desires ; and that we only regain them when we humbly acknowledge our transgressions and are forgiven, and resolutely turn away from evil. The Hindu Shastars beautifully say in one place, "Convert thy body into a temple, give up evil thoughts, and see God with thine internal eye. The source of final happiness is in the heart. Be chaste. Neither sacred Scriptures ; religious ceremonies, pious austerities, the offering of sacrifices, nor liberality, will procure felicity to a man contaminated with sensuality. Virtue and vice are heaven and hell."

Garuda, the king of birds, is believed to be the

great enemy of snakes, and on this account, as well as for the reasons already given, he is regarded with favour by the Hindus. The common people of India repeat the name of Garuda three times when in the fields, and before going to sleep at night, as a safeguard against snakes.

Garuda is said to have left as offspring two sons, half men and half bird, like himself. Their names are Sampati and Jaytayus, and these mythical birds also are regarded as sacred by the Hindus. Being puffed up with pride on account of their father's exploits, and at the thought of their own strength, these two once determined to fly right into the face of the sun. However, as was to have been expected, they failed in the mad enterprise, and Sampati's wings were burnt off, and thus was he crippled for life, showing by sad example the truth of the saying, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Jaytayus perished more nobly, being killed by Ravana, the demon-king of Ceylon, whom he bravely but vainly sought to hinder from carrying off Sita the fair wife of Rama, in the absence of the latter from home. Sampati and Jaytayus are worshipped in India at the festival of the sun, and also at the festival of Rama and other gods.

There are other birds held in special regard in the East, though I scarcely know whether they are called "sacred" or not. There is the pretty little bird designated "the bird of the lost money," because it utters in a low tone something that sounds like "Oh that we had kept it!" Ever as it flies about in the still evening air the plaintive cry is heard, "Oh that

we had kept it!" "Oh that we had kept it!" There is a tradition that its ancestors were a man and his wife, who, having lost their wealth by thoughtless speculation, died broken-hearted, and were transformed into these little birds, to be a constant warning to the Hindus against investing their money carelessly. And the warning is needed all the world over.

Pigeons are great favourites both with the Hindus and the Moslems. They are kept in the house, and are supposed to preserve buildings from decay. Turtle-doves also are looked upon as harbingers of good luck, and are treated with great kindness. They are such gentle creatures that I do not know how any one could hurt them. There were two always in my garden in Calcutta, and I never heard their coo-coo-cooing without pleasure. These gentle creatures speak to us of true affection and enduring love.

Parrots also are favourite birds, and are often kept in the house as pets. There is a bird called the papiya, of the parrot species, which is said to cry, "My eye is going!" from the legend that once a man seeing some wicked deeds done before his eyes, died of terror, uttering the words, "My eye is going!" and was transformed into a bird. Some people are afraid, and it is well that they are, to do anything wrong before a papiya, lest it should betray them. If such had the fear of God before their eyes it would be better still.

One of my predecessors in the pastorate of Union Chapel, Calcutta, Dr. Boaz, a lovable man, and a most successful minister of the Gospel, had a great affection for birds, and especially for parrots. Let

me quote an extract from his Memoirs edited by his widow, who writes : " Dr. Boaz had a favourite parrot, whose note was harsh and discordant, but when about to repeat his daily vocabulary—viz., Papa, Mamma, Padri Boaz, Union Chapel, Dick, Tom, Alick, he would soften his voice, and imitate his master's in a manner the most ludicrous.



TURTLE DOVES.

"Just as the old year of 1860 was bidding us adieu, and we were waiting to greet the new year, Polly walked out of his cage, mounted the table, and, with wings outstretched, exhibiting his gay robes of scarlet hue, as if he, too, must come out in holiday attire, he promenaded with a proud bearing, as if lord of all he surveyed, helping himself freely to his favourite

dishes. The general remark was that we never saw Polly make himself so agreeable. The boys said, 'Oh, but he knows papa has come home to keep a merry Christmas with us.' Next day this beautiful creature was seen lying shivering in a fit, with ruffled plumage, and a look so pitiful that, had he spoken, we could not have more distinctly understood that he sought for sympathy.

"Polly was removed to the fireside, and laid on the hearthrug. It was distressing to witness his agony, which, however, was of short duration, for his pretty little head soon dropped, and there he lay dead. The father's tears were mingled with those of his sons. A relative standing by remarked, 'Surely you don't mean to weep so for a bird?' His reply was, 'You know my nature: I cannot help it. Has the parrot not been with us in all our joys and sorrows, and been the companion of the boys by land and sea? I fear it will not be the only death among us this year.'"

The last remark, alas! proved prophetic, for in October of the same year Dr. Boaz himself was suddenly taken from time into eternity.

There is something very attractive about birds; and all who live in India, whether Europeans or natives, seem to love the birds of the country, with perhaps one or two exceptions, about which more later on when I come to write of household and other pests.

It is sad, however, to think of human beings worshipping birds, as the Hindus do. It is a custom dishonouring to God, and degrading to man!



IN THE CHRISTIAN GIRLS' SCHOOL, AGRA.

III.

GIRL-LIFE.

THERE is a common saying in India which throws a flood of light upon girl-life; it is, "Better to be a clod than to have been born a woman." Truly the lot of females in the East is hard!

When more than one daughter is born in a family, the father, in all probability, will be heard to say,

“What great sin have I committed that I should have another daughter?” And if a man in trouble of any kind is seen sitting about in a dejected mood, he is nearly sure to be greeted by a neighbour with the proverb, “Why do you sit as if a girl had been born at home?”

Girls are not counted when parents tell you how many children they have. Commenting on this custom, the Rev. W. J. Wilkins, in his “Daily Life and Work in India,” says: “I was greatly surprised the first time I noticed this. Calling upon a native gentleman I asked him what family he had. ‘I have two children,’ he said. A little time after, seeing a little girl coming to sit on his knee, while the two boys were playing about, I asked who the little girl was. ‘She is my daughter,’ he said. ‘But,’ I replied, ‘you said you had only two children. This makes a third.’ The gentleman remarked, ‘I said I had two children—there they are: this is only a girl!’”

“Only a girl!” Is it not too bad to speak of girls in that fashion? It must not be supposed, however, that Hindu parents do not love their girls, though they speak disparagingly of them. Of course they love them! How can they help loving the dear little mites? Yet it remains a fact, that, at heart, the fondest father wishes that his girl had been a boy. Boys are always welcome, no matter how many may arrive on the scene. Indeed the Hindus have a prayer to the effect, “May the gods give us seven wise sons, but only two handsome daughters.”

At a very early age girls are separated from boys in the better class homes of India. At seven or eight

girls find that boys will not condescend to play with them for fear of being teased. Thus girls are left to the companionship of their own sex until they are married, but they do not seem to mind.

With regard to recreation, a native writer, Mr. Shoshee Chunder Dutt, says: "The sports and pastimes of girls are dissimilar to those of boys. Now and then, indeed, they are found indulging in amusements common to both sexes. Girls are occasionally seen chasing each other; oftener still, playing hide-and-seek with bandaged eyes, and with as much eagerness as boys. But these impetuous diversions are not legitimately their own. The relaxations that belong to girls especially are of a more sedentary character, and are also more ingenious; and their toys, for the most part representing men, women and children, engross all their attention. The boys—mischievous as they are in all parts of the world, and naturally prone to play pranks—get out of the nursery as soon as they are allowed. But the girls are ever fond of nestling under the mother's wings at home. They are not wanting in the playful gaiety of childhood, but there is not much of active energy in them, and no self-reliance. The daughter's elbow leans ever on the mother's breast. Mothers necessarily retain over their daughters the greatest authority—much greater than what they retain over their sons."

Speaking of the training of girls, Mr. Dutt says "Dancing, riding, and singing are objected to as improper accomplishments; but sweeping the house, cleaning the utensils of the family, and even assisting at cookery are taught them as part of the training

necessary for fulfilling the duties they are bound to. The labour thus imposed preserves girls from becoming useless and indolent, and gives full exercise even to the strongest, improving both appearance and health. Pale cheeks and a languid aspect are rare among women in India, while active habits and alertness of mind are quite common among them. Clean-limbed and agile, a girl of ten years may be seen daily performing duties without fatigue which would almost require a labourer to get through ; and there is no doubt that the discharge of these callings goes far to accomplish those ends which are elsewhere sought to be secured by backboards and dancing."

With respect to education, girls have been sadly neglected in India for centuries. Until within the last forty years or so it was considered a sin to teach girls to read and write. So strong was the prejudice that no man would marry a girl who was at all educated, it being believed that the knowledge of the wife would shorten the life of her husband. A Brahmin gentleman, who was once asked by a missionary what he considered a woman ought to know, replied, "She must know two things: First, she must know the way to the bazaar to buy necessities for the house ; and, secondly, she must know the nearest way from the bazaar home again." It is estimated that ninety out of every hundred girls of ten years of age in India are entirely uneducated. Is not such ignorance deplorable ?

Of late years there has been an effort in cities, and to some extent also in country places, to improve this sad state of things. Missionaries have been the chief

agents in this reform, which has been very successful, though of course as yet only a few girls have been reached out of the many millions that need to be educated.

It was very difficult at first to get parents to consent to send their girls to school. The older women especially were opposed to it, and declared that their gods would be very angry with them if they allowed their girls to be educated, as ignorance was the heritage of the sex. For a time only the poor and low-caste would permit their daughters to be taught, and these had to be paid to come to school. However, as the advantages of education were perceived the prejudice grew less pronounced, and girls of all castes are now found in mission schools. "The schools are situated generally in a quiet lane or street in the middle of a Hindu village or suburb. Sometimes schools are built for the purpose, sometimes rooms are rented in Hindu houses. The girls attend from the time they are about six, until they are eleven or twelve years of age."

The education is, of course, only elementary in these village schools, and the teachers are content if the girls when they leave can read, write, and sew nicely. When in India I visited many girls' schools, and was greatly pleased with the diligence of the scholars, and their evident delight in their new accomplishments. I found some of them reading those excellent lesson books, the "Line upon Line" series, and all seemed to have a very fair knowledge of the Bible, and especially of the Gospel stories.

As an example of the religious impression made

upon the minds of these schoolgirls, I would mention



THE ZENANA.

(By permission of the British and Foreign Bible Society.)

an incident related to me by Miss Heysham, superintendent of girls' schools in connection with the

work of the London Missionary Society in the suburbs of Calcutta. "One of my little girls," said Miss Heysham, "who was married, and was leaving the district in all probability never to return, sent for me to say good-bye. I went, and in course of conversation said to her, 'I should like to give you some little token to keep in remembrance of me. What would you like best?' She replied, 'There is no need to give me anything, for I shall never forget you.' On being pressed she said, 'Give me an English Bible, and write my name in it.' 'But you cannot read English well enough to understand it,' I remarked. She said, 'I will ask my husband to read and explain it to me.' That girl loved the Holy Scriptures. May they make her wise unto salvation!"

Miss Heysham has had many years of experience in connection with girls' schools, and has done a noble work for Christ amongst the young, both by precept and example. It is specially interesting, therefore, to hear what she has to say with regard to the work to which she has devoted her life. In a recent report of her work Miss Heysham contrasted the present position of girls' schools and the education of girls with what it was only ten years ago. She says: "Then, though a nominal fee had been started, many who pleaded poverty had to be supplied with books; now such a thing as giving a book or even a slate pencil is not heard of. Then, teachers had to send in search of children, and found great difficulty in getting their parents to consent to send them to school; now, the parents in many cases send the children with the entrance fee for the month, and money for books and

slates. There used to be a superstition that if girls were taught to read and write they would soon become widows ; now it is just the contrary : the first question put by a match-maker is, does the girl know how to read and write ? If she does not the match-maker leaves the house and goes off in search of one who does. Only last week I heard of an interesting case. A father in search of a wife for his son, heard of a girl who is being educated in our Kalighat School. As is the custom, the match-maker was sent to see this girl and report on her, the result being that the father of the boy with two other friends went to see the girl ; the former said he wished to examine her and see how far she was educated. After he had done so, he turned to her father and said, 'Sir, I do not want a pice from you : I only want your daughter.'

"It was the custom ten years ago to speak disparagingly of parents who sent their daughters to school ; now the custom is to find fault with those who do not. In place of dirty faces, and still dirtier dresses, we now see every child coming to school with a clean face, combed hair, and pretty jacket and sari. Formerly it was immaterial to parents whether their children came to school with their lessons prepared or not ; now in the majority of cases care is taken that the children come to school with their lessons prepared ; and where there is any carelessness at home, a complaint is sent to me to that effect, with a request that I should punish the child. It is an acknowledged fact that girls who have been educated in our schools make better wives and mothers than those who have not."

Miss Heysham may certainly be congratulated on her work, and it is but a type of what is going on all over India. The scarcity of competent teachers is now the only serious drawback to the rapid progress of the good work. "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest."

One of the first to engage in this enterprise of educating native girls was the devoted missionary lady, Mrs. Mullens, who laboured in Calcutta some fifty years ago. Her efforts, however, were mostly confined to the children of native Christians, but amongst these she toiled lovingly, assiduously, and very successfully. And through her Christian girls Mrs. Mullens was able, to some extent, to reach the non-Christians.

Writing of her work in May 1850, Mrs. Mullens mentions a very pleasing instance that is worth recording. It shows how even at that time labour spent over the girls of India was well spent. The passage runs: "It was only a few weeks since that I found out that one of my little girls loved the Bible, and prized Christianity very much. She is, perhaps, the last I should have expected to do so, for she is very quiet, and not at all clever, and I never could find out what her thoughts were. But a little while ago she went to spend a month with a good Christian woman I know. When little Batasy came home the other day I had such a nice account of her. Mary, the woman with whom she lived, told me that she never let a day pass without reading her Bible, and

she used often to ask her the meaning of different passages. One day she reproved Mary's master, a rich native gentleman, for telling a lie in fun, saying that all falsehood was hateful in the sight of God. He was not offended, but patted her head and replied, 'Yes, my little girl, you are right and I am wrong ; I must not do so again.'

"Another time an idolatrous procession passed the door. Batasy exclaimed, 'Oh ! I wish the people would leave off worshipping these idols.' A Brahmin overheard the remark and said, 'And who are you, you little girl, that you speak so disrespectfully of the gods of your country ?' 'I am a Christian child,' replied Batasy. 'My God fills heaven and earth. He made everything ; but you have made your idol yourself with the mud of the Ganges, and then you have bowed down to it and worshipped it, but it cannot help you.' 'And how do you know all that ?' asked the Brahmin. Whereat the little girl said, 'I have read it in the Bible, the Christian's Shastar.' 'What !' exclaimed the Brahmin, 'a child like you read the Shastars !' 'Yes ! yes !' she answered, 'and though I am a little child, I could tell you of a Saviour who could save you from your sins.' But the Brahmin, perceiving what turn the conversation was about to take, passed on, saying, 'No ! no ! I will not argue with a child.'" How true is the Scripture, "A little child shall lead them !"

From South India there has reached me a story of the good that girls' schools are now doing. It is a tale for the little ones, related by Mrs. Haines of Ballary, who says : "One little girl, named Neejammah,

who attended the Canarese school, openly confessed her love to Jesus. She would not pray to idols though urged to do so by her mother. She was most regular in her attendance while she was able, and told Mary, the Bible woman, that it was a great delight to her to come. All through her last illness she was very patient, and more than once expressed her faith in Jesus. When asked if she were afraid to die, she said, 'No, Jesus loves me, and I am going to see Him.' Not long after Neelammah's death I was questioning some of the Canarese girls on their Bible lesson, which was about Christ choosing His disciples. I asked them if Jesus had any disciples now. They said 'Yes!' eagerly. Then I asked, 'Do you know any?' One little girl immediately replied, to my astonishment, 'Yes, Neelammah is His disciple.' And when asked how she knew this, she replied simply, 'Because Neelammah loved Jesus.'"

When I was Editor of the *Indian Missionary*, the organ of the London Missionary Society in India, I received one day a communication which gave me very great pleasure. It related to a wee Hindu child, called Sukhiya, who lived in the neighbourhood of Benares. The communication was simply signed R., but I knew who had written it. I do not think it is any breach of faith to say that it was from a young missionary lady of the London Missionary Society, since retired from India, who wields a facile pen. Let me give the story here, for I am sure my readers, young and old, will be delighted with it. The communication was as follows :—

"My little Sukhiya ! Let me show her to you. Only a tiny Hindu child, the pet of the village where she lived. With a round bonny face and big eyes, and close black hair over her round head, and brown limbs so plump and babyish. A questioning way of looking at you, which dissolved into a smile and a chuckle of delight, and a display of white, even little teeth, when you turned to look at her. Never still, except latterly when in pain—and then, oh ! the sad little face of hers !

"She came to school, my Hindu school, one of the very first, and was so frightened that nothing would induce her to stay, till the singing pleased her ; and though to the end she could never talk plainly, she would repeat in her baby way all the lessons that the other children learned. You should have heard her, standing up with joined hands, bent head, and peeping eyes, saying, in her own language, 'Our Father who art in heaven.' All the native hymns she learned easily too ; she was not to be left behind by the other children. Indeed she surpassed many of them ; her memory seemed very acute. I could never get her to read, but she would repeat such hymns as 'The sweet story of old,' and best of all 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me.' Her multiplication table she could say up to five times, and many things besides.

"Poor little Sukhiya ! Now and then she would get sleepy in school and say, 'Let me sit beside my sister,' and would go up and lay her head on her elder sister's knee, and fall sound asleep, only to wake, rub her eyes, and laugh again when school was over.

Now and then she was full of mischief, would come and sit by me on the floor with her book of letters, and softly pull my dress, or pass her soft little fingers over my feet, and then look up in my face and laugh. She would sometimes come to school in her mother's big *chúdar*, much too long, of course, for such a wee mite, and she would amuse herself with standing up and winding it in the most approved method over her head and round her little body, vainly trying to get rid of its voluminous folds, tucking them in at the waist in front after the fashion of Indian women's costume. She had a print jacket with the rest last Christmas (she will have something fairer and better this year I know—a pure white robe—and I think I see the happy smile on her sweet face as she thanks 'the Giver'), but Sukhiya soon spoiled hers, playing, and it had to be washed in the village tank (none of the cleanest, the plague spot of the place), and the colour went out, so that the child discarded it. But in general she went about only in Nature's simplest garb, guiltless of jacket or shawl.

"She would follow me up the bazaar when I left school, and only a passing cart or herd of buffaloes would scare her. She used to run and touch me, and away to the other side, back again, and dare me once more. The other children would not have done it. Sukhiya knew that I loved her; that every one loved her, dear little happy soul! Then they pierced her ears: 'It was the custom,' they said—and the sores festered. They put black stuff on them, and never washed the little thing. She got fever and became very weak. One Sunday afternoon she was asleep

early all service-time; her grandmother said she had been awake all the night before with pain. I did long to take her away and nurse her in my own home; but it was impossible.

“When, after much suffering, her ears got better, and the smile once more brightened her sad face, she caught the measles prevalent in the village; she rallied from this complaint, but only to catch a chill, which brought on the illness from which she died. I was away for a time, and, returning, did not find out how ill she was; and, seeking for her one day in school, was told that she had died just two days before. If I had only known! It seems so strange without her; the school-house is altered, the lessons have lost much of their interest! Dear little girl! I wonder if one day we shall see you again, and you will have learnt the meaning of the words you sang so heartily here. The whole village wept aloud for Sukhiya. ‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven!’”

Girls in India are married very early, far too early, in fact, and this is one of the crying evils of their lot. Fancy being married at five or six years of age!—and



INDIAN EAR-ORNAMENTS.

that is not at all uncommon, though girls do not go to live with their husbands until they are eleven or twelve. Child-marriage is, in the opinion of many, the curse of India, both physically and morally. Boys and girls, it must be understood, have no choice in the matter of marriage. It is considered a disgrace to remain single, and long before they even know what marriage means, they are, as a rule, married, their parents having settled things for them. The consent of the parties vitally interested is never even thought of, and they must take each other "for better, for worse," just as their parents decide. As for love, the rule is in India, "Marry first and love will come after," and generally speaking it does, at any rate on the side of the young wife, who is said to be devotedly affectionate to her lord and master.

"Her faith is fixt and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
'I cannot understand : I love.'"

Marriage interferes greatly with the education of a girl. With her marriage, say at the latest when she is twelve years of age, she must give up going to school, and it is not often that the husband has either time or inclination to teach his young wife at home. And then the cares of family life multiply, and very often all desire to learn more dies out of the breast of the girl-wife and mother. Yet the knowledge they have received in mission schools must be a great blessing to young wives in various ways—a help to them in their duties, and a comfort in their hours of depression.

A girl belonging to the middle and upper classes of society at marriage is lost to the world, for she is immured in her house, and not allowed thereafter to look upon the face of man, other than her husband and his younger brothers. This custom the Hindus learned from the Moslems. It is a custom that prevails almost all over India, though in some parts the rules of seclusion are more strict than in others. It is a custom that makes life very monotonous for ladies, and especially for those who, though married, are but girls.

The seclusion of women in India has given rise to a special kind of missionary enterprise called Zenana Missions, in which gentlemen can take no part. The word *Zenana* simply means "a woman," and *Zenana* work, therefore, is mission work as carried on amongst women in the homes of Hindus and Mohammedans. Mrs. Mullens, already referred to, was practically the originator of this form of work, though others had thought of it, and one or two, notably Miss Bird, had even obtained admittance into a few homes, to teach privately. Mrs. Mullens, however, began *Zenana* work on a systematic basis, with the firm resolve under God's blessing of making the work permanent, and drawing other missionary ladies into it. It was designed to follow up the teaching of the school in the home, in the case of those girls who, at their marriage, had been obliged to leave school.

The girls themselves had something to do with the starting of the enterprise, for some of them had said to Mrs. Mullens, "As we cannot come to school any longer, cannot you visit us?" "Certainly," was the

reply, "if your husbands will permit me." To obtain consent was no light matter, as, apart from the question of education, native gentlemen seemed afraid of the consequences if they permitted Europeans, even ladies, to pass within the sacred precincts of the Zenana. The elder women also were stontly opposed to the scheme, and foretold all kinds of calamities if the innovation was permitted.

However, a start was made by Mrs. Mullens in two or three houses, and though it was anything but agreeable or encouraging work, yet it was persevered in, and by degrees it grew in favour, and other missionary ladies were drawn in, and houses began to open on every side in Calcutta, and other places, until to-day Zenana work is counted the most promising, perhaps, of the many forms of missionary enterprise in India.

The ladies connected with the London Missionary Society in Calcutta alone visit in about three thousand houses. Who can compute the number of Zenanas visited now daily all over India by European ladies and their native assistants? Truly a good work is thus being done amongst the women of India, and Hinduism is being undermined in the very citadel of its strength—the home. And more workers are urgently needed in this special field of labour.

Miss Fletcher of Calcutta, speaking of Zenana work, says that it is now almost entirely Gospel teaching, as the Bible is the chief text book, and is varied by readings from the "Peep of Day," and kindred publications of a Christian character. The girls of the household, the young wives who in age are but girls,

and the older women, all alike now seem eager to receive instruction.

I might here give Miss Fletcher's account of the way in which the work is carried on in Calcutta. "On entering a house, after the ordinary greetings, we sing a hymn, which usually draws all the women of the house together. It is seldom our singing is stopped, but sometimes a poor little timid wife is afraid it might disturb her husband who is at home, and she thinks that for that day we had better only have the Bible lesson. As a rule we cannot satisfy the women, for I believe they would listen to any number of hymns. The other day I went to a house and sang two hymns, but I was not let off so easily, for the *bow* (girl-wife) said, 'What, do you really mean that that is all the singing I am to have? I want six more hymns at least!' I was amused, and sang two more, and told her if I did all she wished, I should certainly have no voice left for anybody else. Sometimes we get as many as ten or fifteen women all seated round us, and then we begin the Bible teaching. We seldom have fewer than three or four at one time.

"We usually have attentive listeners, but sometimes the babies begin to cry, and so the mothers have to go away; and sometimes two of them will enter into a lively conversation, and rather hinder us; and then again sometimes they get so excited defending their own religion that for that day our lessons remain unfinished. The girl-wives, and the older ones too, like to talk to us about themselves, and we encourage them to do so, for we want them

to feel that we are their friends, and are interested in all that concerns them. Sometimes the babies are ill, and we are asked what is the best thing to do for them ; and perhaps a relation has died, and they like our sympathy ; a daughter is married, and we must congratulate them ; and in many other ways like these we are able to show our interest in them."

Mrs. Hewlett, of Benares, in an account which she wrote for the *Indian Missionary* of Zenana work in the Sacred City of the Hindus, says : " In the seclusion of the Benares Zenanas there appears to be a growing inclination to receive instruction ; the Zenana visitor is now not only admitted but generally welcomed as a friend. The Gospel message she brings is often listened to with deep attention. Needlework and fancy work have still the most attraction for these Indian ladies, at least until they have made some progress in their studies ; then the needlework ceases to be so engrossing. The plan we generally adopt in teaching is to give lessons in needlework when the other lessons for the day are over.

"The ladies of Benares are more secluded than those in other parts of India, and the greater number of Zenanas open to us are not those belonging to what would be called the aristocracy, but to the poorer classes. In visiting some of the houses of the principal native gentlemen of the city with my husband,* I have often expressed a wish to see the ladies of the families, and am always told that some arrangement will shortly be made for me to see them. But these promises are

Rev. John Hewlett, M.A., a most talented and devoted missionary, who died in February 1892.

rarely fulfilled—only the other day we were invited to a Mohammedan wedding, and I fondly imagined that I should be able to see the ladies of the house ; but no, the ladies were not even to be seen. The house was beautifully furnished and brilliantly lighted, we were very courteously received by the father of the bridegroom, and introduced to the bridegroom and all his friends ; but when I expressed a wish to see the girl-bride I was informed that she could not appear until the ceremony was over. Very strange to our English idea—is it not ?—that the bride should not be present at her own wedding.”

Though it is generally speaking true that ladies of the higher ranks of Indian society seldom come under the influence of missionaries, yet now and again this does take place. The Rev. James Kennedy, M.A. who laboured so long and so faithfully in India, mentions a case in his book entitled “ Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon.” He says, “ A daughter of the late Rajah of Coorg, a state prisoner at Benares, was for a time under the tuition of Mrs. Kennedy. She was brought daily to our house, sat with us at table, and was taught with our children. The Rajah wished her to be brought up as a Christian. Eventually she was brought to England, baptised by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Queen standing sponsor, and was married to an English officer. However, she survived her marriage only a very short time.”

The sad lot of girl-widows in India has of late been much commented upon. As women are married so very young, it, of course, often happens that they are left widows long before they are out of their

teens. It is estimated that there are over twenty-one millions of widows in India, and of these no fewer than sixty thousand are under ten years of age, and fifteen and a half millions are between ten and twenty years of age. And these millions of girl-widows are forbidden to marry again. Once a widow always a widow, in India. It is true that the Indian Government has passed a law legalising widow-remarriage, but the people generally count it as a dead letter, and will not sanction second marriages on the part of females, though a man may marry as often as he pleases, and have as many wives as he likes.

And the poor girl-widows are treated badly in other ways. Immediately their husbands die, "they are deprived of their ornaments—in which they so much delight—and of the use of coloured garments, and of their long hair. They are also reproached as unfortunate, and cruelly debarred as accursed of the gods from assisting in domestic religious ceremonies." And during the rest of their life, whether it be short or long, they are under a cloud. They can take no part in gaieties, are allowed no ornament on the person, no food may pass their lips save once a day, and on the monthly fast days they are not allowed food or water from sunrise to sunset. Oh, the pity of it!

Mrs. Duthie, in a report of her work amongst the silk-weaver women of Nagercoil in Travancore, mentions the sad case of a young widow she knew. Writing of her school this missionary lady says: "Of the seventeen girls who are learning, several are married, and will soon be leaving to live in their

husbands' houses. If in the case of any one of them the husband should die before the poor girl, the latter will be doomed to perpetual widowhood. We have one such case—a nice, thoughtful young woman. Her story is touching, which is, 'I am a widow and an orphan. According to the custom of our caste I was married in my sixth year. Unhappily, a few days after my husband was taken ill and died. I did not know of this until my parents told me. The cruel custom of our country compels me to remain a widow all my life, though I do not remember to have seen my husband's face. For long I have suffered much, and have been a stranger to peace of mind. How glad I am now to be able to read! My books are a great comfort to me.'"

Ere closing this chapter I must refer, however briefly, to medical work among the women of India. The inmates of Zenanas, even the girl-wives, are not allowed to have a male doctor in attendance; no, not even one of their own co-religionists. Sometimes the doctor may speak to the patient from behind a curtain, and there have been cases known of women putting their tongues through a slit in the curtain, for the medical man to judge as to the state of health. As a rule, however, the suffering ones have to trust themselves in the hands of old women, who have gained a reputation in the healing art, or they have to go unattended altogether.

Christian missionaries recognising this evil have had compassion on the sufferers, and now lady doctors, both from Europe and America, are being introduced into native homes, where they are gladly welcomed.

I know no nobler work than this. And while the body is being healed the soul also may be reached by a word in season. Female Medical Missions are only in their infancy, but they give promise of great usefulness in the near future.

A National Association for supplying female medical aid to the women of India, on unsectarian lines, has also been started of late years under the highest patronage. To this enterprise also I wish all success. Let every method be tried that suggests itself, only let something be done on a wide scale as soon as possible; for hundreds of thousands of women and girls are in great need of better medical treatment than they at present receive.

“Altogether the condition of women in India is not a particularly enviable one,” says Mr. Shoshee Chunder Dutt in one of his books. I am sure we all agree with this native writer. And there is no hope for permanent improvement, it seems to me, except through the spread of Christianity in the East.

May God richly bless the work of our lady missionaries and their assistants in the schools and homes of India, and let them see of the travail of their souls that they may be satisfied!





PARSEE SUN WORSHIP.

IV.

FIRE WORSHIPPERS.

THE Fire Worshippers of India are the Parsees, the story of whose entry into India is quite a romance. They are not natives of the country, but the descendants of the ancient Persians. The term Parsee is just the Hindustani word for

Persian. The total number of Parsees in India is extremely limited, being not more than one hundred thousand ; but their influence, especially in commerce, is very great, and they are known far and wide for their natural genius in trade, their intelligence, and their munificent charities.

Bombay is the great centre of this community, though members of it are to be found residing at Ahmedabad, Poona, Surah, Calcutta, and other places. Mrs. E. F. Chapman, referring to the Parsees, says : " Their position in India may in many respects be said to be analogous to that of the Jews in Western Europe. Like the Jews, they have lived for centuries as exiles and aliens in a foreign land, keeping themselves distinct from the people among whom they dwell in their religion, their dress, and their social customs, and seldom intermarrying with them. Like the Jews they have distinguished themselves by their aptitude for business, their enterprise, and their commercial prosperity, as well as by their loyalty to the Government, although, like the Jews, the Parsees are seldom, if ever, to be found in the ranks of the army."

To account for the presence of Parsees or Persians in India we must go back to the seventh century, when the Mohammedans from Arabia overran and conquered Persia, in the reign of the Caliph Omar. Yezdigird was the last monarch of the ancient Persian dynasty ; and at his overthrow and death the people of the country, who in religion were Zoroastrians, or, popularly, fire worshippers, were commanded to give up their own religion and adopt that of the Mohammedans.

The bulk of the people of Persia, afraid of the swords of the Moslems, agreed to the change of religion ; but others, having the courage of their convictions, refused thus to demean themselves, and preferred death or banishment. Many were slain, but a few escaped and retired to desert places and bleak mountains in Korasan, where, for a while, some say for many years, they were left in peace.

Eventually, however, the power of the Moslem arms extended to Korasan, and the hunted Persians fled to the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, where again they were unmolested for a season. After fifteen years, however, the Moslems were once more upon the track of the fugitives, and this time with the determination to exterminate them. The enemy were balked of their prey, however, for on arrival at Hormuz they found the forlorn band of persecuted fire worshippers had flown, and were beyond the reach of pursuit.

Like the Pilgrim Fathers of later days, the Persians had taken to the sea, resolved to cross the ocean and found a new home for themselves in a far country. Sailing eastward they stayed for a time on an island called Dir, but soon they moved on and on, and after narrowly escaping shipwreck they landed at a spot called Sanjan on the coast of Guzerat in India. Thus did the faithful few amongst the Persians forsake country, friends, and worldly possessions, in preference to giving up their faith in the religion of their forefathers ! What exactly that religion was we shall see in a moment.

Having landed at Sanjan the exiles, a mere handful

of people, sent a deputation to wait upon Jâdo Rana, the Hindu prince of the country, to ask for permission to settle in the land. This prince seemed disposed to be friendly, but he requested, ere replying to the entreaty, to be made acquainted with the religious creed of the strangers. The answer the Persians, or as we may now call them the Parsees, made was as follows :—

“Hear, O illustrious prince, what we relate of our faith. Be not afraid of us. No evil will befall thee from our arrival here. We will be friends to all in Hindustan. Know for certainty that we worship the god Yezdân. On account of our faith have we fled from the unbelievers. We have abandoned all our possessions. We have encountered difficulties in a long journey. House and land and possessions we have at once abandoned. We are the poor descendants of Jamshid. We reverence the moon and the sun. Three other things we hold in estimation—viz., the cow, water, and fire. We worship fire and water, also the cow, the sun, and moon. Whatever God has created in the world we pray to.”

The Prince of Sanjan was satisfied with the account the Parsees gave of themselves, and expressed his willingness to let them stay in his dominions, and to afford them protection, on certain conditions. The conditions were four in number. First, the refugees must give up their own language, and for the future speak Guzerati, the language of the land of their adoption. Secondly, their women must exchange their own peculiar dress for the garment of the country. Thirdly, the men must forego the use of military arms and armour, and become peaceful citizens. And

fourthly, the marriage ceremony among them must be celebrated at night and not by daylight.

The Parsees after a little consideration agreed to these terms, and they were then, in the year 717, allowed to settle in the country ; and in India they have remained ever since, and, as I have already said, they have grown into a prosperous if not a very large community.

It may be asked, did the Parsees keep their part of the agreement ? Practically they did, though not to such an extent in some particulars as to lose their individuality or nationality amongst their new friends the Hindus. With respect to the language, the Parsees only retain their old Persian dialect in the exercises of religion. For general conversation in public, and even amongst themselves in private, they invariably speak Guzerati, and seem to have as much affection for it as the natives themselves.

With respect to dress, a Parsee lady wears a *sari* like her Hindu sisters, only the upper part of the garment, instead of passing from the right waist diagonally over the chest to the left shoulder, is carried up the left side over the head and brought from the right shoulder to be tucked under the left waist. Moreover, a Parsee lady has a relic of ancient Persia round her head in the form of a white handkerchief, and this distinguishes her from a Hindu lady.

Sir Edwin Arnold, referring to this peculiar custom, says : " It is incumbent on Parsee ladies to wear a rather ngly white band drawn tightly over the crown and brows ; and this remnant of the early times has resisted even the new taste for silk stockings, satin

shoes,* and European ornaments. But the pretty



PARSEE CHILDREN.

Zoroastrians, who possess the finest and glossiest

and so the white headband is pushed farther and farther back, until it threatens to disappear altogether under the silk *sari* of violet or rose, sea-green, or sapphire, drawn so coquettishly over the head."

With respect to the agreement not to wear armour or to bear arms the Parsees have kept to it more or less strictly all along. In times of extreme peril, now and again, they have fought in their own defence; but at the present day they are an eminently peaceable people, and never follow the trade of war.

It is said that when the Parsees first gave up their armour, they symbolised it by a thin muslin shirt which they wear next the skin and which is called a *sadaro*. As this garment is worn by men and women alike, however, the foregoing explanation of its origin can scarcely be correct. No one, not even the Parsees themselves, seem to know why it is worn.

The Parsees, like the Hindus, have the investiture of the sacred thread. The thread of the Parsees is more like a cord, as it consists of seventy-two threads, and instead of being worn over the shoulders it is used as a girdle round the waist. The knot by which it is tied is undone daily, and a prayer is repeated over it when it is re-tied. Ladies as well as gentlemen wear this sacred thread, which is supposed to preserve both body and soul from the power of the evil spirit, Ahriman, who is represented in the Parsee faith as antagonistic to the good spirit Ormuzd.

The name fire worshippers has been given to the Parsees on account of their extreme veneration for the sun and for fire. There are some who say that this strange people actually worship fire, and perhaps some

of the ignorant and more superstitious amongst them do ; but the majority do not, but simply venerate fire as the representation of Him who is the Eternal Light.

“ God, according to the Parsees, is the embodiment of glory, effulgence, and light ; and a Parsee engaged in prayer is directed to stand before fire, or with face to the sun, as proper symbols of the Almighty. Fire is the best and noblest representative of the Divinity in its brightness, activity, purity, and incorruptibility ; while the sun is the best and most useful of God’s creation.” The Parsees, in short, would say with the Psalmist, “ The Lord God is a sun and a shield : the Lord will give grace and glory : no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.”

Though the Parsees cannot be said as a body actually to worship fire, yet they appear to do so, and hence are called fire worshippers. They have what are called fire temples in which to perform their religious ceremonies. These are small, unpretentious buildings, and each temple contains an altar on which is found a portion of the “ holy fire,” which is said to have come down from heaven originally, and which is designed to be a perpetual reminder to the faithful of the Eternal Light, even God Himself.

The fire, which is called Bahram, is never allowed to die out in Parsee temples, but is fed day and night by the priests, who are in constant attendance. The worshippers gather round it reverently at the time of service, though they take care not to approach

very near it. Even the priests approach it only with a half mask over the face, lest their breath should defile it, and never touch it with their hands, but with sacred utensils.

Offerings are made to the fire as the representative of God—offerings of flesh, milk, butter, and homa, twigs, and as these things are offered in sacrifice by the priests, the people signify their approval with bowed heads. Prayer and the reading of a lesson from the Parsee scriptures follow. Then the priests chant the praises of Ormuzd, pour out a libation of homa juice to the sacred fire, perform other religious ceremonies, and finally conclude with prayer, especially for kings and all in places of authority and power, that righteousness may be done throughout the earth, and that peace may everywhere prevail. Thus the service in a fire temple seems to be a strange mixture of truth and superstition, of sense and of nonsense. No stranger is allowed to enter at any time within the doors of a Parsee temple. It would be unpardonable profanity so to do.

The Parsees are considered a very upright if a rather peculiar people. They have the very highest character for honesty, industry, peacefulness, intelligence, and benevolence. Truthfulness is a heritage of the race. The very children amongst the Parsees are taught that to tell a lie is a most shameful thing, grieving to God, and disastrous to man. It is believed that "he that speaketh lies shall perish little by little." The Evil Spirit Ahriman is called "the liar of liars," and young people are exhorted to beware of becoming like him.

The Parsees are an enlightened people, and have

been foremost amongst the races of India in taking advantage of European education for the benefit of their children, both boys and girls. Sir Edwin Arnold, in his "India Revisited," says: "When in Bombay we visited a large school for Parsee girls, where some one hundred and fifty of the Zoroastrian maidens of all sizes and ages were learning wisdom of the modern sort, the little ones with black tresses flowing from beneath embroidered caps, the older girls in the *sari*, the pretty, bright *choli*, and the skirt. They sang for me, and proudly exhibited their achievements in sewing, knitting, and crochet-work."

The same writer in the same book gives an interesting account of a musical afternoon at which he was present, given in a large house on Malabar Hill by a Parsee gentleman, Mr. Kabraji. Let me quote the passage as throwing light on the home life of the modern Parsees. It runs:—

"Here there were assembled in a really magnificent pillared hall, paved with white and blue marble, some eighty or a hundred of the leading members of Parsee, Hindu, and Mohammedan society, including at least forty native ladies. Sir Frederick Roberts, Mr. Ilbert, Sir William Wedderburn, Mr. Justice Birdwood, and a number of English residents, mingled with the large native party on perfectly easy and equal grounds, but no London drawing-room could have presented a scene so bright in colour and character.

"The Parsee and Hindu ladies—many of them personally most charming in appearance, and all gentle and graceful in demeanour—wore lovely dresses of every conceivable hue, rose-colour, amber, purple,

silver, gold, azure, white, green, crimson. A Guzerati girl, in red and gold, sang the 'Last Rose of Summer'



FIRE TEMPLE OF PARSEES, BAKU.

with notable skill to the piano played by her sister ; and then a ring of Parsee maidens, in flowing silk robes, and dark glossy tresses, chanted a 'song-circle,'

softly singing in chorus, and beating time with their hands, while they moved round and round in a rhythmical ring of singular grace.

"The music ended with 'God save the Queen,' quite accurately sung by a number of these Indian maidens in native words ; and after refreshments had been handed round, chaplets of flowers and little balls of rosebuds and the fragrant champa buds were distributed, and the well-pleased company separated by the light of innumerable oil lamps set among the shrubs and trees of the compound.

"Assuredly such a gathering is a great and signal token of the increasing friendship arising between the various races of India ; nor could anything be calculated more to impress and gratify a fresh observer coming back, after many years, to modern Bombay." Truly, in the East as elsewhere, "the old order changeth, giving place to new," and the Parsees are an important factor in bringing about the change.

Commenting on the changes wrought of late years in the Parsee community, Dr. Mitra, in a lecture given in Calcutta, said : "At the beginning of this century the Parsee at home differed very little from his Hindu fellow-subjects. The furniture of his house was the same, and he enjoyed life squatting on cushions and carpets like the Hindus. His victuals consisted of rice, home-made unleavened bread, kid, mutton, and vegetables dressed exactly in the same way as Hindu dishes are. He ate from plates of silver or bronze or brass, according to circumstances, as did the Hindus ; and his lady sat apart and took her meals separately from the male members of the family.

“Amongst the higher and middle classes of the people of Bombay these customs have been entirely given up. In no respectable Parsee house are the old *farsh* and *takia* to be met with ; chairs and couches have entirely set them aside. Metal plates have made room for glass and china ; the meal is now served on English tables, and tea, leavened bread, and pastry figure thereon.

“At ordinary meals the rice and curry still hold their ground, and on ceremonial occasions English dishes are generally eschewed. The restriction about the lady of a family dining with her male relations has also been to a great extent set aside. Mrs. Bomanji sits at the head of the table, and distributes tea just in the same way as does Mrs. Jones, Brown, or Robinson. Her presence, too, serves in a great measure to improve the decorum and tone of conversation at table.” It has to be said, however, that as a rule Parsees will not invite individuals of another religion or nationality to dine with them, having not yet seen their way to break through all caste distinctions.

Parsees are fond of active exercise, and in this they differ from Hindus and Mohammedans, who love to take life easily even in their play. A Parsee boy may not always be the *dux* of his class at school, but he is always leader in the playground. Parsees play both cricket and football with considerable energy and skill ; and all manly games are their delight. Consequently in physique this race is the superior of other Indian races.

Notwithstanding their general intelligence and

good sense, the Parsees display surprising superstition in one direction. They have absolute faith in the exploded science of astrology. "They will do nothing without consulting the stars, their conjunctions and their oppositions. They rarely start on a journey without being satisfied that no adverse star stands in the way, and no marriage can be solemnised among them without a careful scrutiny of the relative position and disposition of the heavenly bodies." They believe also in lucky and unlucky days, and kindred superstitions, just like the rest of Easterns.

The religious book of the Parsees is called the *Zend-Avesta*. It is a poor production, chiefly taken up with remarks about uncleanness and the evils which result therefrom. The Parsees say that at one time their forefathers had a very voluminous sacred book, which gave instructions to men concerning good actions, which explained religious duties, and the way to obtain paradise, which gave a full account of the Spirit of Good and the Spirit of Evil, and of the angels in heaven, and countless other matters.

However, that old book has been lost ; and of the present book, the *Zend-Avesta*, the Rev. John Milne, M.A., in his St. Giles' lecture on the subject, says : "When it was discovered to the learned of Europe in the middle of the last century, its uncommon stupidity led half of its critics to pronounce it a forgery. Its oldest morsels are the most spiritual ; the newer parts view religion through the eyes of priests, scribes, and pharisees. No great religion has left so poor a record."

In writing of the Parsees one remarkable custom

of theirs cannot be overlooked, as it differs so much from anything that exists amongst any other race. The custom I refer to is the manner in which the dead amongst them are disposed of. It might be thought that fire worshippers would burn their dead like the Hindus, but no ! fire is considered too sacred a thing to be profaned by a dead body. The earth also must not be contaminated by a body from which the soul has departed.

As, then, the Parsees, owing to their religious scruples, can neither burn nor bury their dead, they have recourse to "exposing" them on what are called Towers of Silence. I visited some of these towers when in Bombay, and witnessed the funeral of a little girl. Visitors are only allowed within a certain distance of the towers, but I was near enough to see all that passed.

The finest tower at Bombay is over ninety feet in height, and has a circular inside platform of three hundred feet, with a central well about a hundred and fifty feet in circumference. The circular platform at the top of the tower is entirely paved with large stone slabs, well cemented, and divided into three rows for the reception of the dead bodies of males, females, and children respectively. The bodies are taken in by priests dedicated for life to the Towers of Silence.

At the funeral I witnessed there were very few mourners ; but the few there were walked behind the bier in pairs, each couple joined hand in hand by holding a white handkerchief between them, in token of sympathetic grief. The bier was made of iron, and was carried by the priests. As the procession drew

close to the tower it stopped, and the mourners then turned back, while the priests carried the body of the departed child within the gloomy edifice, up the staircase to the top of the building, where they "exposed" it in the children's portion.

It was an extraordinary sight, and a sad one for mourners and spectators. Vultures and other birds of prey were hovering round, and when the priests withdrew they alighted upon the exposed body, and within an hour or so, I was told, nothing would be left but bones, which, when perfectly dried up by atmospheric influences and the powerful heat of the tropical sun, would be thrown down the central well, where they would gradually crumble to dust. Thus do the Parsees dispose of their dead.

What a romantic history the Parsees have! How extraordinary some of their customs are! It is surprising to think of their preserving their individuality through all the centuries since they landed on the shores of India; and to all appearance they seem destined to remain "a peculiar people" for generations to come.

It is very seldom indeed that a Parsee becomes a Christian. Yet there are one or two notable instances. The Rev. Sorabji Kharsadji, now a member of the Church Missionary Society at Poona, was brought up in a strict Parsee home. However, while pursuing his studies, he was led to read the Bible, and the old, old story of Jesus and His love laid hold upon his affections.

Terrible was the wrath of the young man's friends when he declared himself to be a Christian. He was



TOWER OF SILENCE, MALABAR HILL, BOMBAY.

imprisoned and cruelly treated, but all in vain; for nothing could shake his faith in Christ or his determination to join himself openly to a Christian community. As a last resort his relations placed him in an oarless and rudderless boat of the flimsiest description, and left him out on the open sea, hoping he would be drowned. He reached land, however, and obtained the protection of the Government until he joined the Church Missionary Society, when his father disinherited him, and his mother died of a broken heart.

The young convert was beside himself with grief at the sad turn of events; but with a still greater and nobler man he could only say, "Here I stand: I can do no other." He felt that, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." In due time the young man was ordained to the Christian ministry, and to-day the Rev. Sorabji Kharsadji is a pillar of strength to the native Christian Church of India.

Thus from all religions Christ our Lord is gradually winning true and devoted followers. We must work and pray for the speedy fulfilment of the prophetic saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."





TRAVELLERS' BUNGALOW.

V.

HOUSEHOLD AND OTHER PESTS.

IN all countries there are certain household pests which are more or less of a trouble and grief to housewives, and an amusement, if not a terror, to children and young people; but perhaps India carries off the palm for the number of such pests, and for the discomforts they cause.

In attempting to describe these minor drawbacks

of life in India, it is difficult to know where to begin ; but it may not be amiss to mention that the common *flea* is as prominent as any other enemy of mankind, and worthy of a forward place. This little torment seems to be ubiquitous, for wherever in the world you go, you are sure to make his acquaintance, or, perhaps more correctly, he is sure to make yours. And where you would find one in England you will meet with fifty in India.

I remember on one occasion seeing my wife's white dress, when we were travelling, quite black with a little army of fleas, that sprang up suddenly and unexpectedly from the floor of a room which we had just entered. The contingent that attacked me I did not see, but I felt them. Has any boy or girl reading this book ever slept or attempted to sleep in a house, fairly swarming with fleas ? It is a daring enterprise, and requires courage and patience—especially patience. As some poet has said :—

“No sleep till morn, when flesh and hunger meet.”

In large cities in India and in European houses it is possible, except in times of epidemics of fleas, when they come by millions, to keep this plague fairly well in hand by the liberal use of kerosene oil and carbolic acid ; but in country places, and when you are travelling, you must just bear the infliction as philosophically possible. It might be worse.

Closely allied to the flea in popular fancy is the *bug*, and India has produced a few splendid varieties of this unclean creature. I suppose my young readers have heard of the old lady who was desirous of going

with her family to a seaside resort in England, and who, in looking down the advertisement columns of her daily paper, came across a likely notice which concluded thus: "N.B.—Terms moderate." "My dear," said the old lady to her eldest daughter who was standing by, "here is just the thing for us, 'N.B.—no bugs—and 'terms moderate.'"

"N.B." rendered in the same way could not be said of a *Dāk bungalow* or travellers' rest I once entered at Gya in Northern India. My presence in the district arose from a desire to visit the celebrated Buddhist temple not far away. A kind and paternal Government has provided travellers with a bungalow in which to abide for a day or two, as there are no hotels within fifty miles.

A travellers' rest in India is a very primitive dwelling-house of one or two small rooms, with a bedstead in a corner, a table in the centre of the floor, a chair or two, and a man in charge to cook for you and wait upon you. When I entered the bungalow at Gya, my first duty was to inspect the bedstead, with the result that I discovered an interesting colony of very fine bugs arranged in a solid mass, five or six layers deep, all round the woodwork. I did not take the trouble to count the colony, but at a rough guess I should say there would be not less than five thousand of the dark creatures. I stayed there three nights, and slept, on the whole, very peacefully; but it was on the table, and not on the bed.

India has a speciality in bugs which is called the "flying-bug," and one passing through a room is enough to take away the appetite of a party of hungry

people, owing to the unpleasant odour that is left behind. Bishop Heber, in his travels up the Ganges by boat, was greatly troubled by these pests. Writing in his Diary on June 19th, 1824, he says : " One of the greatest plagues we have as yet met with in this journey is that of the winged bugs. In shape, size, and scent, with the additional faculty of flying, they resemble the 'grabbatic' genus, too well known in England. The night of our lying off Barrackpore, they were very troublesome ; but when we were off the Raja's palace they came out in hundreds and thousands from every bush and every heap of ruins, and so filled our cabins as to make them barely endurable." The wonder is that the good Bishop was able to endure the affliction at all.

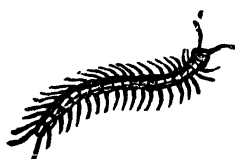
Happily bugs will not stay in clean houses or with clean people, so the remedy is simple in European homes in India.

Cockroaches, however, which are almost as plentiful as bugs, are no respecters of persons, and are found in European and native houses alike. These cockroaches, which are nearly two inches in length, love darkness rather than light, and not altogether because their deeds are evil, for I believe they are fairly useful in clearing away odds and ends that even the best of servants will sometimes leave in unwatched corners. Personally, I have no dislike to cockroaches as long as they are content to work in the dark ; but now and again the lamp-light attracts them, and, using their wings, they fly up into the drawing-room, and give one the horrors by alighting on the nape of one's neck.

Ladies, for some unexplained reason, stand greatly

in dread of cockroaches, almost as much so as of mice. I have known children, however, play with them, and turn them over on their backs, with great glee. I have heard that cockroaches sometimes take the place of raisins in puddings, but I cannot remember eating any.

A more serious pest is the *centipede*, which fortunately is very rarely seen in houses, though now and



CENTIPEDE.

again I have killed one both in bathroom and bedroom. The common species is two or three inches in length; but sometimes a variety is found about seven inches in length and half an inch thick. A nasty-looking creature is a centipede, with its hundred little legs as sharp as needles.

I know a lady who trod on a centipede one morning with her bare foot, and in a second the vicious creature had nearly buried itself in her flesh, and a heated iron had to be applied before it could be induced to relax its hold. The place was very much inflamed, and had to be poulticed, and it was weeks before the foot could be freely used again for walking. It is well never to walk about the house with bare feet in India, though of course the servants do, and they seldom come to any harm through the practice.

Musquitoes are a perpetual pest in India, and nowhere are they worse than in the city of Calcutta, especially in the rainy season, when the country around is a perfect swamp, and malaria is in the air. A mosquito is a very small, insignificant-looking insect,

but it makes its presence felt both by night and day. Its bites are sharp and painful, and make the skin very irritable, so that it is almost impossible to keep from scratching; and yet it is extremely foolish to do so, for scratching usually makes matters worse. If a bite is bravely borne, and judiciously let alone, probably the pain will soon pass away; but scratching increases the irritation, and what was merely a speck becomes a big sore.

Musquitoes trouble young people as much or more than adults. I remember when visiting the General Hospital one Thursday to have a chat with the patients, I came to a bed on which a sailor-boy lay in pain. His face was pitted as if with small-pox, and I asked him if he was recovering from that disease. "No, sir," he said, "the marks are only mosquito bites." It was a revelation to me that the little pests could do such mischief. Sailors in the harbour at Calcutta suffer much from mosquitoes which swarm on the river. The poor lad had been driven into a feverish state by the constant torment, and was in the hospital to recruit. From that day I understood how it was that the mosquito had earned for itself the name of "that villain mosquito!"

Europeans in India very often have fine gauze curtains to cover their beds at night to protect them from the common enemy. Sir Edwin Arnold, in his "India Revisited," commenting on this custom, humorously says: "Woe to the careless or too sleepy traveller who has enclosed a mosquito within his protecting curtains before seeking repose! The crafty enemy waits patiently until its victim sinks into the

first slumber, then it searches keenly for the unguarded portions which may present themselves, and silently stings and sucks.

“Every minute the hum of its insulting little trumpet is heard, preluding a new approach, and seems to sound like a fiendish mock as the sufferer beats his face and arms in vain endeavours to slay the minute assailant. A violent blow upon one’s own nose is merely followed by a new *reveille* from the musquito’s horn, and it is useless to lie still and let the foe have his wicked will. You wake from brief and feverish slumbers to find yourself spotted all over ; while the assassin, gorged and somnolent, is seen taking his ill-earned rest upon the curtains ; and when, yielding to a spirit of uncontrollable revenge, you immolate him by a crafty stroke, that tiny speck of blood which he exudes in dying has cost you more philosophic calm than twenty-four hours of peace can restore.”

There are a few negroes in Calcutta, chiefly connected with the shipping of the port. A story is told of one of them, a mere boy, a captain’s servant, which is characteristic of the smartness of the race. The captain, who unfortunately often indulged too freely in strong drink, had a remarkably fiery nose, and one day his servant noticed while his master was lying back in his chair asleep that a musquito hovered about his face; and at last deliberately alighted on his nose, from which, however, it immediately flew away again as if in astonishment and fear. “Ah!” exclaimed the young negro, highly delighted, “me glad to see you burn your foot !”

Many preventives have been suggested in connection with the mosquito pest, and amongst the rest wormwood leaves, which it is asserted, if rubbed over the face and hands, will keep the troublesome insects away. Perhaps so !

A more certain remedy, however, would be the wide cultivation in India of a plant called *Drosara dichotama*, or the mosquito-catcher. This plant grows about one foot high, and has narrow, sharp leaves, which are densely covered with fine hairs, each of which is coated with a bright gummy substance. Mosquitoes seem to be fascinated by this plant, and if one is placed in a room they will gather round it, and eventually alight on it in swarms.

It is most interesting to watch the method by which this curious plant secures its prey. It is a genuine case of "the biter bitten." "Immediately the mosquito alights on the leaf, it may be that only one out of its six legs will stick to the sweet substance at the extremity of the hairs, but in struggling to free itself the insect invariably touches with its legs or wings the contiguous hairs, and is immediately fixed. The hairs meanwhile are not idle ; being sensitive they slowly but surely curl round and draw their victim into the very centre of the leaf, thus bringing it into contact with the very short hairs, which are placed there in order to facilitate the process of sucking the life-blood from the body." Unfortunately this mosquito-catching plant is difficult to cultivate, as it thrives but indifferently ; otherwise what a boon and blessing it would be to the human race !

Another household pest is the *lizard*, which may

be seen on the walls and ceilings of every house in India. I scarcely think the lizard should be regarded as a pest, for he is a very useful little creature, and gentle and harmless. Yet most ladies and young people feel afraid of lizards, and try to clear them out of the house ; chiefly, I suppose, because you can never be sure that one of the cold, clammy little things will not fall from the ceiling on to your face, or down the back of your neck.

Lizards are useful in one respect, because they



LIZARD.

delight in flies and mosquitoes for food, and spend their whole time in catching and eating them. It is a remarkable sight to watch a lizard stalking a mosquito, on the wall or the ceiling. The insect may be five or six yards away, but the lizard can see it ; and slowly, very slowly and cautiously, draws nearer and nearer to it, until at last, when within a foot or so of its prey, it will dart forward like lightning, and the mosquito disappears down the capacious throat of the lizard, and is no more seen or felt by human beings.

On my study table in Calcutta a lizard was constantly to be seen, as tame as could be, and I let it have a drawer for a home. I have heard of a gentleman who became quite attached to two lizards, and

invariably carried them about with him in his coat pockets, and would produce them sometimes in juvenile society, much to the delight of some and the terror of others—the latter chiefly being girls.

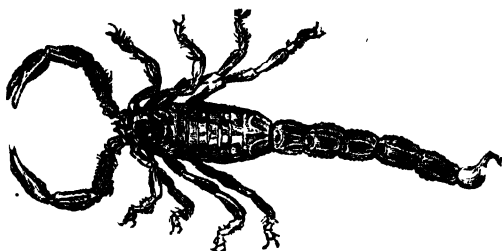
Mohammedans, strange to say, hate lizards from a silly belief that they hang their heads in mimicry of the attitude of reverent Moslems at prayer. A Mohammedan calls lizards “evil things,” and will kill them without the slightest compunction, though of other pests, as a rule, he will take no special notice. I must confess to having a partiality for lizards, and I could never bear to see them needlessly disturbed.

Spiders, however, I detested. I do not mind a little English spider that can be swept down and turned out of doors without any trouble; but a gigantic Indian spider, sprawling over the table or running along the floor or the ceiling, is enough to make one's flesh creep. The worst spiders are called *Balork Mukra*, and are black and hairy. Another kind not quite as large is red and white, and hairy. These creatures when driven into a corner will, if they have a chance, turn and bite, and a nasty mark they can make, too, which if not attended to at once will cause a painful swelling which will last for two or three days. Beware of spiders!

Bishop Heber seems to have made the acquaintance of all Indian pests, and of course he includes the spider in his list. I notice an entry in his Diary on September 18th, 1824, as follows: “Within these few days all the vermin part of Noah's household seems to have taken a fancy to my little ark. To the scorpions, the cockroaches, the ants, and the snake, were added this morning two of the largest spiders I ever saw,

and such as I regretted afterwards I did not preserve in spirits. In a bottle they would have made monsters fit for the shelf of any conjurer in Christendom."

The Bishop mentions *scorpions*, and truly these creatures well deserve the name of pests. There are not many of them in the cities of the plains in India, but in the Northern Provinces they abound. I have a scorpion, which I caught and bottled, and have on exhibition in my museum, and I never look at it without thinking what a dangerous customer it was when alive.



SCORPION, NATURAL SIZE.

A scorpion is not unlike a lobster on a small scale. The claws are not the worst part of it, however—the sting is in the tail, which is usually carried curled over the back. Scorpions feed on beetles, and other insects; and after seizing them, pierce them with the sting before eating them. They also eat the eggs of spiders. They lurk under stones, and in holes and crevices, but come forth to seek their prey, running with great activity. When alarmed or irritated they show great fierceness, evidently aware of the power of their sting, which they move about in all directions as if threatening an adversary.

Scorpions are universally disliked, and not a little

dreaded, being apt to get into houses and in shoes and boots and hats, so that accidents are very frequent in places where they abound. The sting of a scorpion is seldom fatal, but is very painful, and is attended with much sickness and constitutional derangement, nor do the effects soon cease. The best remedy is *ammoria* internally administered, and also applied externally.

Miss C. F. Gordon Cumming, in her book entitled "In the Himalayas and on the Indian Plains," tells a strange story of the cure of a woman who had been bitten by a scorpion. The tale runs thus : "One day when we were sitting under a great tree a poor woman came past, half carried by her son. She was writhing in agony, having been bitten in the foot by a scorpion. When my moonshee, or teacher, heard what was the matter, he at once knelt down on the ground, muttering prayers, and then taking up a handful of dust he therewith rubbed the wound. The woman, who had sunk down, almost in a convulsion, slowly came to herself, and in a few minutes arose, blessed him, and walked away, scarcely needing any support. We asked him what he had really done to her, and he declared that he had only prayed for her and then touched her foot." It must have been a prayer of faith, for it cured the wound.

The industrious little creature the *red ant* is very often a pest in India. It is impossible to keep these ants out of the house, and they are usually to be found just where you do not want them—in the store-room, having a fine time amongst the provisions. They seem to be specially fond of sweet things.

I remember when drinking my first cup of tea in India—it was in Madras—noticing some little things floating on the top. I asked my host what they were, and he said, “Oh, nothing, only ants; they will be after the sugar.” I began to lift them out of the cup with my spoon, but was laughed at for my pains, and assured that before I had been long in India I would not hesitate to swallow any number of ants. The prediction was not fulfilled, however, for I never got over my objection to the mixture. Ants are well enough out of doors attending to their multitudinous duties, but they are decidedly in the way in a cup of tea. I cannot say that I like them any better in jam either, and they are very fond of jam.

What thieves the red and black ants are! Householders have to watch their possessions very carefully, or the ants will make serious depredations, especially in the granary; and the cunning of the little creatures is marvellous. The Rev. J. Ewen of Benares, in his book on India, says:—

“On one occasion I had a small basketful of bajra, a small coarse grain, on which poultry is fed, in a room covered with matting made of strips of bamboo interlaced. It was gradually disappearing, and I could not discover how it went. One night I entered the room without a light, to fetch a book I knew where to find. I was startled by the noise in what was an unoccupied room; it was like the far, faint march of an army. I hurried out to get a light, and on returning found the floor black with ants, each busy carrying off a grain. I stopped to watch their mode of operations, and it was certainly cleverly

planned. There were two parties. One was engaged inside the basket. Their duty was to bring the grain to the top, and from there to drop it to the carriers on the floor. These picked it up and hurried it off to their nest. In this way they could empty the basket in a very few days."

Red ants are held in great reverence by the Hindus, who may constantly be observed searching for ants' nests, near which they will place a small quantity of sugar, or some coarsely ground flour. The idea is, wherever red ants colonise, prosperity is sure to follow in the homes of human beings. All the same, ants, both red and black, are a pest in the household.

And *white ants*, which are about the size of a grain of rice, are a thousand times worse, for they can do as much mischief in an hour as would take a man a week to redeem. These depredators do not attack provisions, but have a taste for millinery and ladies' finery in general. They do not object either to a suit of clothes. They are partial also to furniture, and the beams of houses. Books, too, seem to agree with their digestive organs. Only give them a fair field in a house, and they can do wonders in the destructive line in a very short time.

White ants work in the dark. They cannot bear the light, and if they have to cross an open space they form for themselves along the wall or ceiling tunnels of hard mortar in which they hide. Fortunately thus they betray their presence. However, much mischief is usually done before they are discovered. It is surprising how they will eat a great beam to dust in the inside, which outwardly appears sound.

In the church of which I was pastor in Calcutta, we had all the beams tapped at regular intervals of time ; and every four years we incurred a very heavy expense in renewing beams which the ants had eaten. On one sad occasion a beam that had been overlooked cracked during service, and a little girl was so much injured by the falling *débris* that she had to be carried to the infirmáry; but she ultimately recovered, and was no worse for the accident. My pulpit, also, was more than once attacked, and had to be partially replaced. In private houses, in shops, and in public buildings the depredations of these little pests are indeed very serious in India.

There are many other pests that might be referred to at considerable length, but I shall simply mention some of them in bringing this chapter to a close.

Frogs often hop into the house from the road or the garden, and their plaintive cry at night-time is distressing, and their croaking is at all times objectionable. *Bats* at dusk make free to fly through the house. Quite a number every evening came to eat nuts over my bed while hanging on to the ceiling. The nuts they got from trees in the garden. Every morning the shells had to be removed from the top of the musquito curtain, which was the only protection between the bats and the bed. The little insects called *silver fishes* abound in all houses, and make sad havoc of clothing.

At certain seasons of the year *green flies* would come into the house by tens of thousands, and try hard to get into the soup-tureen, and to interfere generally with the comfort of the evening meal. In the morning

there were heaps of dead flies on the floor which had to be shovelled out.

Crows, too, and *flying-foxes* were very anxious to make my acquaintance, and did not scruple to enter the house. Oh, those comical but wicked crows! If anything bright was left lying about on a table, a smart crow would be sure to notice it, and hop in and pick it up, and be off again, before you could expostulate even in the mildest of tones. Crows are fond of eggs, and when the egg-man came these thieves would be sure to be about, and sometimes would succeed in making away with two or three treasures. It was a sight, to be sure, to see a crow with its head on one side drawing nearer and nearer to a coveted egg, and at last suddenly and fiercely sticking its bill into it. Occasionally the egg would fall just as the thief was sailing out of the window with it, and then what an uproar there was over the lost tit-bit!

But I must stop! Household pests make an attractive and almost endless subject for a returned Anglo-Indian to write about. And let not any reader think that by these pests life is made unbearable in the East. Far from it! Use becomes second nature.





ADAM'S PEAK, CEYLON.

VI.

SACRED FOOTPRINTS.

ONE of the most curious customs of the East is the worship of sacred footprints of gods and goddesses. As I travelled about India I often saw men, women and children drawing near to with reverence, and bowing down in admiration before, footmarks on stone, which they believed to be impressions from the feet of Siva, Vishnu, or Buddha, or some other so-called divinity or revered personage.

The worship of sacred footprints has arisen, I suppose, from other customs of the East connected with the feet of human beings. The feet of kings and holy

people are spoken of in preference to the other parts of the body. His Majesty the ex-king of Burmah was always mentioned as the "golden feet." Then putting the feet upon the necks of fallen kings was a favourite way of triumphing over foes. When people are disputing, even at the present day, in India, should one be a little pressed and the other begin to exult, the former will say in anger, "I will tread upon thy neck, and after that beat thee." A low-caste man insulting one of a higher caste is sure to hear an onlooker say to the offended individual, "Put your foot on his neck."

I call to mind also on more than one occasion in my house in Calcutta, when I have been grieved with the conduct of a servant, and he has seen that I was angry with him, he has come humbly into my presence, and before I could stop him has thrown himself at my feet, and attempted to place one of my feet upon his neck as a sign of absolute submission and to appease my wrath.

The idea between man and man in this humiliating custom is, that one is the inferior of the other—that one is the servant and slave of the other. And the custom has been extended to gods and goddesses. Thus a worshipper will say in his devotions, "Truly the feet of Siva are upon my head!"

Now I do not say that this idea of total subjection when connected with God is a wrong one. It is, I believe, a good thing to recognise the fact that all things are under God's feet—that heaven is His throne, and the earth His footstool. Not that God is trampling upon us as a wrathful king who has

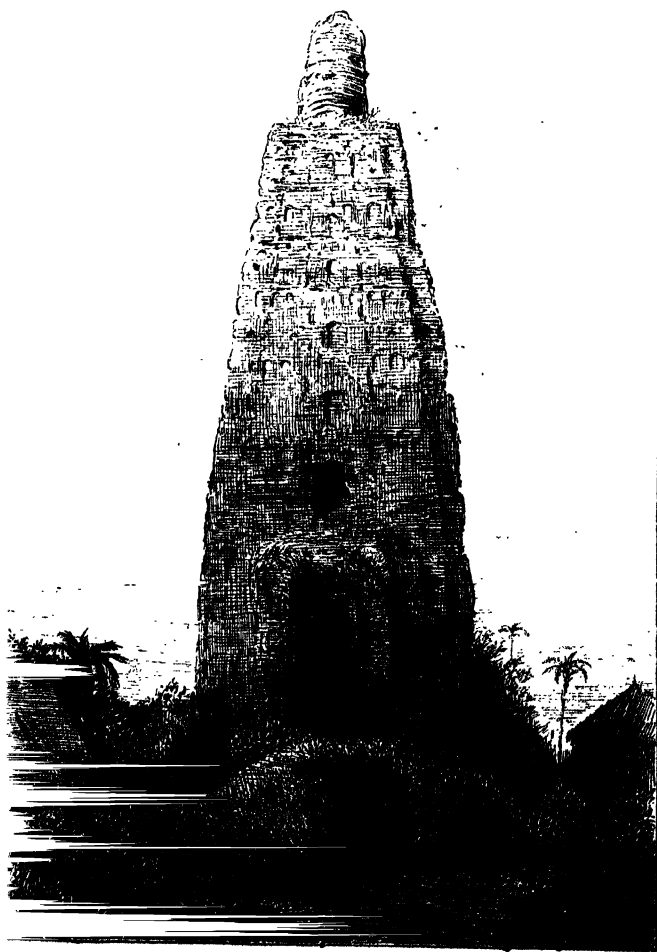
conquered us, but rather that we are under His feet because He is all-powerful. To be under God's feet should mean to us that we are subject to God as a child is subject to a kind and affectionate father. The position is, so to speak, one of humility but not of humiliation.

The people of India, alas ! have not confined themselves to the spiritual side of this subject, but have made for themselves footmarks on stone in different parts of the country, which have in course of time come to be believed in by the ignorant as the actual footprints of their divinities, and as such they are now commonly worshipped. Thus a helpful spiritual truth has been degraded into an idolatrous practice which is harmful to the souls of all who indulge in it. ‘

I remember visiting a small sacred footprint temple at the corner of a bathing ghât on the banks of the Ganges close to Scandal Point at Monghyr. A Hindu priest, with whom walked a bright little boy, went with me to show me the temple, which was dedicated to Sita, the good and beautiful wife of Rama. Looking inside I saw a footmark chiselled on stone.

The story goes that the goddess Sita, after bathing in the hot springs at Sita Kund, about six miles away, took one stride to the Ganges, and left her footprint on a stone, then took another stride and landed on a rock in the middle of the Ganges, about a mile away. There there is another footprint. A Rishi, or holy man, dwelt on that rock, and Sita's errand was to see him and talk with him.

The priest in charge of the little temple at Scandal Point, which has been built over the footprint of Sita,



BUDDHA GYA BEFORE RESTORATION.

asserted that once a year, generally in the month of October, sweet music came from the temple ; and that the general belief was that Sita, even now, at intervals visits the spot to gratify her faithful worshippers by giving them a foretaste of the music of the blest. I asked if the little boy was musical, and the priest answered, " Yes," with some confusion. My question was not what lawyers call a "leading" one, but it nevertheless set me thinking when I saw the effect it had produced, and I came to the conclusion that the priest and his sharp little lad knew more about how the music was produced than they would care to tell.

However, Hindu worshippers rarely raise any sceptical questions, believing implicitly what the priests tell them. Thousands and tens of thousands of people visit that temple at Monghyr annually, and when the music is heard there is a great cry of "Sita ! Sita !" and the worshippers bow themselves down in humble adoration before the sacred footprints of their favourite goddess.

When in Benares, the sacred city of the Hindus, I was taken to see some footprints near Manikarnika Kund, the famous well of Hindu mythology. Upon the ghât or bathing place is a large round slab called Charana-paduka, projecting slightly from the pavement ; and in the middle of it stands a stone pedestal, the top of which is inlaid with marble. In the centre of the marble are two small flat objects representing the two feet of Vishnu.

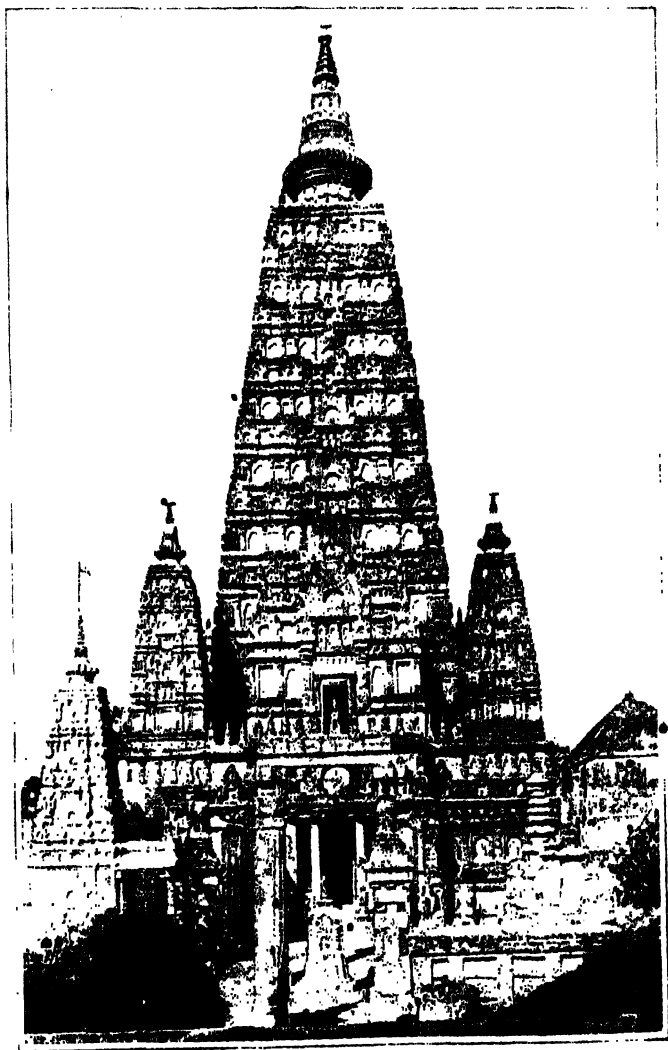
The tradition is that Vishnu selected this precise spot for the performance of ascetic rites, and the worship of his brother god Siva. When he left two

footmarks were seen, and these have ever since been held in great veneration, and have received divine honours. In the month of Kartic (October) multitudes of people flock to the place to worship Vishnu's feet, and by that worship the priests tell them they are certain of an entrance into heaven.

At the moment I was looking on only a few people were gathered round the sacred footprints, but I was struck with the devoutness of their worship. Again and again did they bow themselves down before the sacred feet, and earnestly did they seem to be invoking the blessing or deprecating the anger of Vishnu. And a little mite of a girl was one of the most ardent and enthusiastic of the worshippers.

It is interesting to note that the Buddhists as well as the Hindus have their sacred footprints to worship. In 1885 I visited Buddha Gya, which is famous as the locality of the holy pipul tree under which Buddha sat for six years in mental abstraction, and was tempted of the devil, and overcame the evil one. In front of the great temple at Buddha Gya there is a small open temple of four pillars, covering a large circular stone, and on this stone two feet are carved, which are believed by Buddhists to be the footprints of their Lord. That little temple is called Buddha-pad, or the temple of Buddha's feet.

At a place called Pâtali, also in Northern India, there is, or was, a large stone on which were prints of Buddha's feet, each eighteen inches long and six inches broad. The story in connection with these sacred footmarks is that Buddha, when he reached Pâtali on his way to Kusingara where he was to die,



BUDDHA GYA AS IT IS.

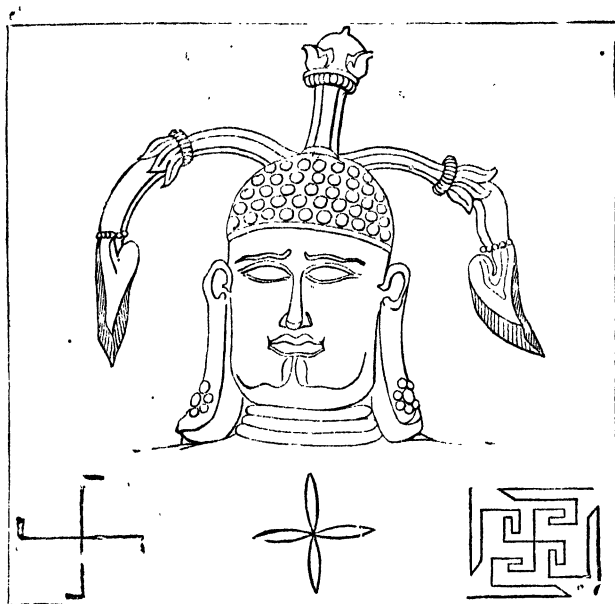
turned his face to the south, and, standing on a large stone, said to his faithful follower Ananda: "To-day for the last time I behold my ancestral kingdom, and here I leave my footprints. One hundred years hence there will be a king, named Asoka, who will reign over this country, and fix his court on this spot."

True enough a hundred years after Buddha's death Asoka took up his permanent abode at Patali, and caused a temple to be erected over some footprints which were believed to be Buddha's. And for centuries those footprints were devoutly worshipped by true believers. At length, however, a king arose who had no faith in the sacred relics, and who ordered them to be effaced from the stone; but tradition says the command was more easily given than obeyed, for after every stroke of the chisel, the lines reappeared as before. Afterwards other kings who had heard of the famous stone wished to carry it off to their own dominions; but again tradition asserts the deed was found to be impossible of execution, for, in spite of strenuous efforts, the block could not even be lifted from the ground. Thus the sacred footprints of the great Lord Buddha remained in Patali for the edification of the faithful.

Buddha during his lifetime had many opponents, the greatest being Mahāvira, the last of the twenty-four patriarchs of the Jain religion; and at Pāwā there is a small temple containing the footprints of Mahāvira. Pilgrimages are made yearly to this shrine, for the footprints are counted very sacred, and their adoration is believed to be a cure for various diseases.

Pāwā is called "the sinless or pure town," and is

one of the holy places of the Jains, who in many respects resemble the Buddhists, differing from the latter chiefly in their ritual and objects of veneration. The Jains believe that their past and future state depend entirely upon their own actions. They practise



JAIN EMBLEMS.

a strict morality, but offer no sacrifices to gods. They hold life, in both man and beast, to be very precious, and are the chief supporters of beast hospitals in India.

The Jains number about half a million, and are a prosperous community like the Parsees. In Calcutta

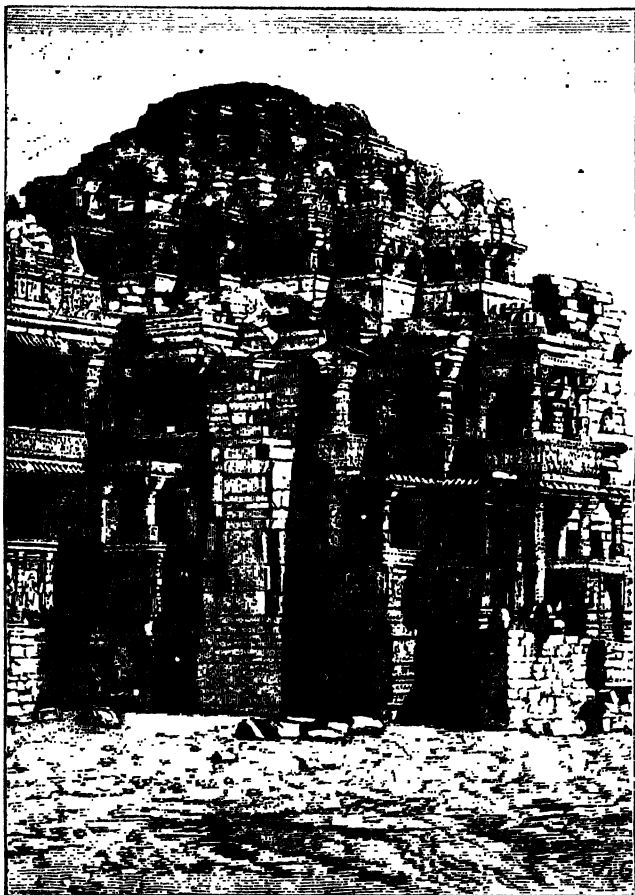
they have a very beautiful temple which is well worth a visit from all tourists, and yet it is often overlooked.

But to return to the sacred footprints of the Jain patriarch at Pāvā. The stone on which the impressions appear is believed by the Jains to have been the footstool of Mahāvira, who taught his followers sitting out in the open air. The marks were left by constant use, and when the great teacher was taken away his disciples continued to meet at the old familiar place, and having their master no longer to reverence they adored the prints of his feet. And from those far-off days until the present day, according to popular belief, the custom has been kept up. Only, I think, in the East could such statements be credited.

Perhaps the most striking instance of the worship of sacred footprints that I saw in India was at a Hindu temple in Gya, about five miles from Buddha Gya. This temple is called Vishnu-pad, the temple of Vishnu's foot, and is in the heart of the old town. It is a large building as temples go in Northern India, and the porch in front is a very neat, airy structure, and looked at from a little distance appears singularly graceful. Inside the porch hangs a large brass bell, which when I was there was constantly in motion. The clanging of the bell, the cries of the priests, and the prayers of a large gathering of worshippers in the immense porchway, made a deafening noise, and yet, withal, one had the feeling that Vishnu-pad was a place for worship.

The centre of the shrine, the most sacred part of the temple, was guarded by high folding doors plated with silver, and through these doors I was not allowed

to go, nor did I indeed desire, for without doing so a



JAIN TEMPLE OF ADINATH, GWALIOR.

very fair view of the interior, which was lighted by oil-lamps, could be got. In the centre of the shrine

was an octagonal basin coated with silver, and on this basin there was the impress in stone of a foot sixteen inches or so in length. I have a model of it hanging on my study wall which refreshes my memory, and enables me to speak with considerable certainty. The foot is said to be Vishnu's. There were seven worshippers, a priest, a boy assistant, and a cow in the shrine on the occasion of my visit.

The priest was seated at one corner of the octagonal basin, the boy was standing behind him, the seven worshippers were at the other corners, and the cow was walking round the sanctuary and making herself very much at home.

Ganges or Soan water, flowers, and rice were thrown into the basin, and the priest instructed the worshippers at a given signal to bend their heads over the side and touch reverently with their foreheads the sacred footprints. This the devotees proceeded to do; and I was thinking that the scene was impressive, though sad, when the large brown cow upset my gravity by proceeding very quietly and sedately, while the worshippers' heads were bowed, to eat up all the offerings.

It was a strange sight, combining the sublime and the ridiculous, and I could see that the boy behind the priest was highly pleased with the action of the cow, though he said nothing. Sacred cows, of course, are privileged creatures in India, and it is no uncommon thing to see them in temples. The particular cow I am referring to was only doing its duty in eating the offerings, only it should have waited until the worshippers had finished their devotions.

As a final ceremony the priest grasped some lights, and solemnly waved the flames before the faces of the worshippers, who then got up and passed out of the shrine to make room for others.

The story of the origin of the sacred footprints at Vishnu-pad is extraordinary. It is said that Gaya, a pagan monster or demon, got into the bad books of the gods on account of a desire he had to save all sinners from perdition. This seemed shocking to Brāhma, Vishnu, and others, and they determined to seize Gaya, and put a stop to his designs. They found the task a difficult one, however. In a Hindu account of the transaction it is recorded that "all the gods and goddesses sat upon him, but were unable to keep him down."

Despairing of conquering Gaya by force of arms, guile was at length resorted to. Brahma in affable tones asked him to sit down and rest, and while the tired demon was in that position his enemies quite unexpectedly and treacherously threw a heavy block of stone upon his body. Even then it is thought that Gaya would not have succumbed if Vishnu had not hit upon the expedient of stamping upon the block of stone. That stamp was too much for the monster underneath, and his life was crushed out of him. And ever since that day and deed the impress of Vishnu's foot has been worshipped by credulous Hindus. It is estimated that probably forty thousand people annually visit the temple of Vishnu-pad at Gaya.

In Ceylon there is a world-renowned sacred footprint on Adam's Peak, one of the highest mountains of the

land. Almost all sects have claimed and do claim an interest in the spot.

Portuguese Christians have been superstitious and credulous enough to declare that the mark on Adam's Peak was the footprint of the Apostle Thomas, who they say visited Ceylon to speak to the people of a Saviour's love. The Mohammedans declare that the mark was left by Adam, who, after the Fall and the expulsion from Paradise, was compelled to perform penance for his sins by standing on one foot on the summit of Adam's Peak, where he remained for ages until God pardoned him. The Hindus maintain that the mark was made by the god Siva, who on one occasion alighted on the mountain when on a journey, and left behind the impression of his foot; and, finally, the Buddhists say that their great master, when on a visit to Ceylon, ascended Adam's Peak and left the imprint of his foot upon a rock as a convincing proof of his superhuman power, and enjoined his followers ever afterwards to adore and worship the impression.

At the present day Adam's Peak is in possession of the Buddhists, who have erected a little temple over the sacred footprints; but they permit Hindus and Mohammedans, and indeed adherents of any and every creed, to visit the spot and worship to their hearts' content.

In the months of February, March, and April, thousands of people perform the somewhat weary pilgrimage, for the roads to the sacred shrine are rough, and in parts near the top of the mountain steep and dangerous. Many accidents have been known to happen, and a few deaths have occurred

in connection with the ascent of Adam's Peak. Iron chains are fixed in the sides of the rock on which the temple is built to assist the climbers.

The sacred footprint is on the very apex of the mountain. It is only called a footprint by worshippers, for any one else looking at it would declare that it was just a cavity in the rock. The cavity is about five feet and a half in length, and two feet five inches in width. There are small raised portions which are meant to delineate the form of the toes, but altogether it is as clumsy an attempt at deception as can well be imagined. Fancy a footprint nearly six feet long!

The form of worship is as follows:—The priest stands on the sacred footprint facing the pilgrims, who prostrate themselves on the ground, only raising their hands above their heads in an attitude of supplication. The priest then recites several articles of Buddhistic faith, which the worshippers repeat after him. When the priest has finished, the people rise from the ground, and raise a loud and united shout of thanksgiving and praise, which is echoed and re-echoed from crevice to crevice and crag to crag on the mighty mountain. Then turning to each other the worshippers exchange salutations of peace and goodwill; and relatives warmly embrace each other, and express kindly feelings for each other's happiness.

Before leaving the spot, and they must leave the same day, as no one is allowed to spend a night on the mountain, the pilgrims make offerings to the sacred footprint, according to their means and inclination, some presenting money, others fruits, or grain,

or flowers, and others pieces of cloth wherewith to decorate the temple. The offerings are allowed to remain on the sacred footprint a short time, but they are then taken away by attendants and become the property of the chief priest of Adam's Peak, who, as may easily be imagined, amasses in course of time great wealth. Thus the superstitions of the many are made to minister to the greed of the few.

Is it not extraordinary that human beings can descend so low as to worship so-called sacred footprints? Verily Eastern people are credulous to a degree! Oh the folly and wickedness of such degrading practices!

What the people of the East need to learn as rational creatures is, that the object of their affection and worship should not be the imaginary footprint of a god or goddess, but the one true God Himself, powerful and majestic, putting all enemies under His feet without doubt, but yet merciful and gracious, a God of compassion and love, as revealed to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, in moral conduct, in beauty of character, in self-sacrificing deeds for the good of humanity, has left us an example that we should follow in His steps.





WATER-CARRIERS.

VII.

BHEESTIES, OR WATER-CARRIERS.



A SIGHT that is sure to attract the attention of a stranger in India is that of the bheesties or water-carriers, who are to be seen at certain hours of the day busily engaged in watering the dry and dusty roads. Though water-carts are not unknown in the East, yet they are not greatly favoured and water-men, or bheesties, as they are called, are

preferred. The work, of course, proceeds very slowly, but no one grumbles at that, and water-carriers have the advantage of costing little, for common labour is cheap in India. The bheesti's work is laborious. I have often pitied the poor creatures as I have seen them, in an almost naked condition, and usually lean and lanky, toiling along under the heavy load of a great water-skin called a *mussuk*. This curious arrangement for carrying water is made from goats' skin, and when full looks not unlike an unwieldy pig slung over the shoulder. The water is judiciously squirted out of a small orifice in the *mussuk* on to the thirsty road, and the quantity of liquid that the vessel will hold is something wonderful. It is said that the constant pressure of the wet skin on the back of the bheesti-wallah is the cause of a serious sore, in which is often found a parasitic worm, which occasionally causes death.

In the towns the bheesties, fortunately, have not far to go for their water, whether they want it for the roads, or the public and private gardens, or to supply the empty baths in the homes of the people; but in country places, and especially in the hill stations, the distance to be traversed sometimes is very great, and thus adds seriously to the exhaustion of the toil.

Miss Cumming, referring in her book on India to the work of bheesties in Simla, where she resided for a time, says: "Our water-carrier was considered fortunate in having at first to go only about half a mile down the Khad to fill his water-skin. But as the season drew on, the water retired lower and lower, so that he and all the other bheesties of the

neighbourhood had to go far down a deep, rocky ravine, and sometimes wait long enough for their turn at the well. It was no joke to have to climb that rugged footpath a dozen times a day, especially with a burden so heavy as a water-skin.⁹

The conclusion we must come to is, that the poor 'bheesti-wallahs, while they are most useful members of society, have very hard times of it. Indeed, the lot of the labouring man all the world over is hard, and it is well that those who are in better circumstances in life, and more favourably situated, should extend to them the hand of sympathy.

W. Trego Webb, Esq., of the Bengal Education service, in a charming little book of Indian lyrics, calls attention, in a few appropriate words, to the work and worth of the Indian water-carriers. •

The words are :—

“Like as the organ-man in public road
 Beareth his music with him on his back,
 Or as the hawker bends beneath his pack,
 The *bheesti* toileth with his watery load
 The dusty precincts of our town abode.
 • The baths, which one could ill endure to lack,
 • Have oft, when pipe-fed rillet runneth slack
 Their debt of moisture to the *bheesti* owed.
 So, *bheesti*, mayst thou still at eventide
 Subdue the dust, and, foe to all that's dry,
 Water the paths where others walk and ride.
 Thine is, I ween, no useless destiny;
 Yet thou at length, thy goat-skin laid aside,
 Subdued thyself, beneath that dust must lie.”

There are various tales told of water-carriers which are interesting and instructive, and a few of these I will relate, as they throw light on the beliefs and

customs of the people of the East. Let me begin with one that illustrates the superstition of the Hindu mind in association with idolatry.

In ancient times, it is said, when there was a famine in the land, as, alas! often happens in India, some of the gods and goddesses, as represented by stone idols, did not receive their accustomed morning ablution on account of the scarcity of water. There was one idol in particular, the image of Siva, the third person in the Hindu Trinity, in a certain district, which for months had been neglected. The people of the neighbourhood, in the hour of terrible distress, thought more of their own wants than of the wants of the so-called gods. Indeed, some of the men were heard to say, "Of what use are our gods if they cannot provide water for themselves and for us their worshippers, so that we may all be preserved from death?" The women, dreadfully shocked, exclaimed, "Hush! hush! that is blasphemy: the gods will be angry with us, and send greater and more dreadful troubles upon us if we do not speak respectfully to them and of them." It should be borne in mind that the Hindus believe that all calamities are the work of the gods when they are grieved with mankind. Even the women in this particular case, however, agreed, that out of the little water that could be obtained none could be spared for the ablution of the gods: the latter must be left to take care of themselves.

Thus neglected, of course, many idols, owing to the intense heat, cracked, and otherwise came to grief; and it seemed likely that the idol in question would share the same fate as the others; and it would have done

so but for the altogether unexpected succour of a water-carrier. Amongst the villagers, it appears, a poor *bheesti*, after listening to a conversation one



SIVA.

evening about the god Siva, resolved that, at any cost, the idol should receive, at least, his morning bath. From that time, therefore, whenever the water-carrier drew near the village with water, which he had to bring from a long distance, he stopped to sprinkle the

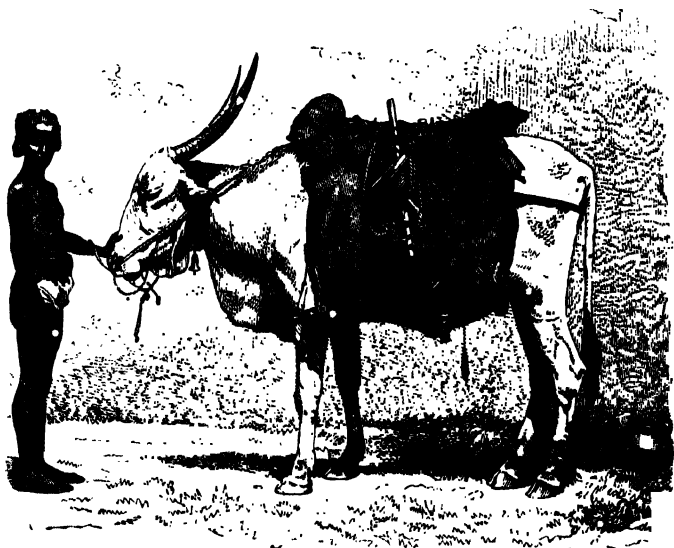
idol. It was, perhaps, at the peril of his life he did it, for every drop of the water was more precious than gold, for the existence of many human beings depended upon the daily supply. However, the man risked something for the sake of Siva, with the firm conviction that, in the long run, the god would reward him.

After the famine had passed away, and prosperity had returned to the land, the *bleesti* was still observed going about his laborious work as poor as ever. His neighbours, who had discovered what he had done, even taunted him, saying, "Behold, your attention to Siva has brought you no reward! It would have been better to have drunk the water yourself!" The man made no reply, but performed day by day his allotted task in his menial position, still holding fast his faith in the merit of the act he had done, and in the justice of his favourite god.

And at the last, the story says, his deserts were fully recognised. One night, just twelve months after the time he had begun to bathe the idol, he had a remarkable dream. Siva came to him in his dream, radiant with beauty and glory, and praised him for his attention during the period of scarcity of water, and promised him that if he would go at midnight on the following day to a certain spot, he would find a herd of buffaloes, and as many of these as he could tie with ropes should be his own.

At the appointed hour the *bleesti* was on the spot with a quantity of rope that he had made or borrowed, and there he found the buffaloes, and with nervous haste he proceeded to tie up as many as he could

before daylight appeared. When at length the sun rose above the horizon, he found himself the fortunate possessor of over two hundred large, strong, and healthy buffaloes. Passing with them from village to village, he soon disposed of his stock at very good



BHEESTI, OR WATER-CARRIER.

prices, and returned to his home and to his wife and children in great joy, and lived ever afterwards in ease and comfort, the admired of all his friends and neighbours. "Thus," the Hindu chronicler says, "was the devout worshipper rewarded for his attention to the god Siva in a day of calamity and sore distress." It is a foolish tale, evidently invented by the priests of

Siva to increase the reverence of the people for the idol. I have related it because it is associated with a *bheesti*, and because it illustrates the superstitious thought and feeling and action of the Hindus on the subject of idolatry.

I have heard of another story in which a *bheesti* figures, which powerfully illustrates the convictions of the Hindus in the matter of caste. • It is said that after one of the battles of India, during the time of the great Mutiny, a British officer, who was badly wounded, was heard crying out for water. "Water! water!" he exclaimed; "give me a drink of water, or I die!" Many heard the sad cry, but there was no water at hand: what little had been provided had been consumed. Still the piteous wail was heard of "Water! water! for the love of God!"

At length a *bheesti* was seen coming from a distance with the precious fluid in a *mussak* on his back. It was brackish water scarcely fit to drink, and it was carried in an old skin bag; but, poor as it was, dirty as it was, oh, how gladly it was received! The wounded Englishman stretched out his hand towards it, eagerly, feverishly, and took it, and put it to his lips, and drank it as joyously and as freely as if it had been water from the freshest and sweetest spring.

Not far away from the British officer lay a native officer, a brave man of the Punjab, who had fought well, but had fallen at last with his face to the foe, covered with wounds. This man also longed for a draught of water to assuage, if possible, the terrible thirst which was upon him, and which added tenfold to the agony of his dying hours.

To the side of the native officer the water-carrier was directed, but the wounded man waved him away. His caste prejudices, his religion, forbade him to take meat or drink from the hands of a low-caste man. It was not that he objected to the water because it was brackish, or dirty—the objection was that it was carried in a skin, and that the *bheesti* was of a lower caste than himself. Two or three Englishmen standing by remonstrated with the officer, telling him that the water would assuage his sufferings, but it was all to no purpose. Casting a greedy look on the life-giving fluid he turned his head resolutely away, and bade the water-carrier depart. The power of caste was stronger than the agony of thirst which was upon the brave but misguided native officer.*

* The Rev. H. T. Blackett, M.A., referring to caste prejudices in connection with water in his book entitled “Two Years in an Indian Mission,” says: “When a Mohammedan water-carrier gives any one water to drink, he pours it from the spout or neck of the skin into the hand, which the thirsty man holds under his mouth, as he squats on the ground; and a Hindu pours it in the same way from a brass or earthen vessel called a *lota*. At the mission school at Delhi there is a Mohammedan and a Hindu to provide water for those of their own religion, the water being always poured into their hands; and the Christian boys receive it through the still more extended medium of a bowl with a long spout, lest they should defile the *lota* by coming too near. One man drinking from another’s cup would destroy the caste of both, though some of the Kulin Brahmins do



A WATER-CARRIER, MADRAS.

not object to other people using their *lotas*, as they consider themselves so infinitely superior to every one else as to be unaffected by such trifles. Water, moreover, thrown over a man will impair his caste."

In short, caste holds a demoralising sway over the people of India, and is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the prosperity of the country, and to the acceptance by the people of our Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Yes, caste, in my judgment, more than anything else stands in the way of the millions of India receiving Him, whom the Bible speaks of as "the Water of Life." Everything, therefore, that can be done to break down caste rules and restrictions should be done.

Some time ago there appeared in the *Christian Miscellany* a story concerning *bheesties*, which I am sure my young readers will be glad to know. It was as follows :—

"Outside a *serai*, or resting-place for travellers, sat in the moonlight four men, smoking their *hookahs*, or Indian pipes, and having one of those long talks which natives of the East most dearly love, and which they sometimes prolong far into the night. Perhaps the most striking figure of the group was a venerable Sikh, whose hair and beard, never touched by razor, were now of silvery whiteness. The other men were of various nationalities, but used Urdu as a tongue common to all.

"The first speaker, a Persian, was giving a flowery account of his own country, which none of the others had ever seen. *Such* horses, *such* fruits, *such* cities, he described, that to hear him one might think that

Persia, of all the lands of earth, was the most beautiful and the most blest.

“‘And our men are unmatched for size and strength,’ pursued the speaker, using a good deal of gesticulation. ‘I am one of a family of ten sons, and not one of my brothers but is taller and stronger than I am. What would you say to our *bheesti*? He is some eight feet in height, and carries a *mussuk* made of the hide of an ox, which, when full, five of your ordinary men could not lift!’

“Dominie Sampson at these statements would have exclaimed, ‘Pro-di-gi-ous!’ The friends of the Persian merely remarked, ‘Wah! wah!’ though the sage old Sikh rather incredulously shook his head, and muttered in his beard, ‘I should like to see such a *bheesti*!’

“Then spoke a fine tall Afghan: ‘I could tell you of a *bheesti* compared to whom your Persian *bheesti* is but an emmet. I know one who can carry a *mussuk* as big as a mountain, and as white as the snows on the Himalayas. This water-carrier can travel thousands of miles without stopping or feeling weary, sometimes whistling and sometimes howling as he goes.’

“‘Pro-di-gi-ous!’—No! ‘Wah! wah!’ cried the listeners. The Persian coloured, and angrily said, ‘I will not believe such a pack of lies!’

“‘Oh, brother!’ remarked the old Sikh, smiling, ‘there is more truth in the Afghan’s tale than in thine. Look yonder,’ he continued, as a white cloud passed over the face of the moon, ‘and listen to the rushing blast which is shaking the leaves of yon

palms. The wind is the mighty *bheesti* whom the great Creator employs to bear swiftly the huge white *mussuks* which convey this gift of rain. The words of the Afghan are not the words of folly.'

" 'Thou art wise, O Father !' said the youngest man in the group, who had hitherto spoken but little. 'Now listen, whilst I tell of a third *bheesti* ; not tall like the first, nor strong like the second, but bearing a more wonderful *mussuk* than either. This *mussuk* is not longer than my hand. It is very old, too, and it is carried by a feeble man.'

" 'Useless ! good for nothing !' exclaimed the Persian, somewhat rudely interrupting the narrative.

" 'Listen before you say so,' calmly replied the speaker. 'In this *mussuk* is water of such wonderful virtue, that if but a few drops fall on good soil a spring of surpassing sweetness bursts forth, sometimes spreading and spreading, till first a brook, then a wide stream, and then a glorious river appears. The most learned cannot calculate, nor ages on ages limit, the effects of a few living drops from that blessed *mussuk*.'

" The Persian and Afghan uttered exclamations of surprise, but a thoughtful inquiring look was on the face of the aged Sikh, who whispered, 'Where can that *mussuk* be seen ?'

" 'Here,' replied the speaker, a Bengali, as he drew a Bible from his vest. 'This book contains the word of God ; and its contents, when received with faith, are spirit and life.'

" 'It is the Christian's Shaster !' said the old Sikh, raising his hand to his brow in token of respect.

“ ‘Let me pour forth some drops of the living water,’ said the Bengali, who was a native Evangelist ; ‘the moonshine is so bright that I can by it read a little from the pages which I know and love so well.’

“ No one made any objection. The Pērsian listened with curiosity; and the Afghan with some attention, but it was on the old Sikh that the holy words fell like the rain from heaven. This was not the first time that he had drunk from the ‘precious *mussuk* of inspired Truth, and its water became to him as a stream of life, which would never fail him till time should be lost in eternity.”

And what passage of Scripture did the Evangelist read? The *Christian Miscellany*, in telling the story, did not say, but probably it was the seventh chapter of the Gospel according to John, the chapter in which we read these words : “ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.”

Now is there not one great lesson we may all learn from the foregoing narrative? Just this, that we may all be *bhecsties*, yea, that God wishes us to be water-carriers. Like the Bengali Evangelist, we may carry about with us, wherever we go, the *mussuk* of Divine Truth, scattering a drop here and a drop there, on the dry and thirsty land of the human heart.

India needs an army of Christian *bhecsties*, to carry the precious “water of life” far and wide, and to cry aloud as they go, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ! The Spirit and the Bride say, Come ; and let him that heareth say, Come ; and let him that

is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

I pray that my young readers may obtain for themselves a copious supply from the "pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and then listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ who has said, "Freely ye have received, freely give."



WATER-CARRIER.



CHRISTIAN NATIVE GIRLS.

VIII.

BRAVE YOUNG CONVERTS.

IT will be clearly understood by those who have read this book so far, that it must be no light matter for the natives of India to give up their ancestral religion and embrace Christianity. And yet every year some of the people receive grace

so to do. The labours of our missionaries and other servants of Christ in India are not in vain, for the word of truth finds a lodging place in many hearts ; and though perhaps the majority who receive the word gladly remain secret disciples, there are a few who are bold enough and brave enough to declare before all the world that they are Christians. And of such I would now write.

These converts come from all classes of society, and are of both sexes, and of all ages. My intention, however, is only to deal with the young in this chapter. I wish my readers in Europe to see that amongst the young people of India may be found brave and noble characters, who for Christ's sake shrink from no sacrifice and fear no danger. Would that both in the West and the East there were more young people with the courage of their convictions in things moral and spiritual !

A while ago there was in Bangalore a young Brahmin who attended a mission school, first as a scholar and then as a teacher. He was a clever and promising youth, and his friends had hopes of his making his mark in life ; but these hopes were frustrated, or at least his friends thought so, by his announcement one day that he was seriously thinking of becoming a Christian,—yea, that he was a Christian at heart, and was making up his mind to confess his faith publicly by baptism.

The reading of the Bible, the teaching of the missionaries, and the holy, consistent lives of the latter, had wrought this change in the feelings and convictions of the young Brahmin, and led him to forsake

idolatry. It was a genuine case of conversion by conviction, and when the missionaries heard thereof they were glad. The youth's friends, however, were beside themselves with anger, and adopted all kinds of harsh measures to turn the young man from his resolve to be baptised.

Persecution, as so often happens, but deepened the convictions of the convert and strengthened his resolves ; and one day he overcame all his fears, and proceeding to the native Christian Church at Bangalore connected with the London Missionary Society, was baptised in the presence of a large congregation, after answering decidedly and firmly the questions put to him with regard to his abandonment of Hinduism and trust in the Saviour.

Even after the baptism the relatives of this young man did not cease their persecution and their efforts to turn the new convert from his trust in Jesus, but all was in vain. The enraged Hindus then said, "The missionaries have given you a drug to turn your mind"; but they were met with the quiet and wise rejoinder, "No ! God has given me His Spirit to change my heart." Is not such moral courage in its way heroic ?

A similar story comes from Belgaum. Shiddhappa, a native of Hubli, the son of a basket-maker, made the acquaintance of some Christian people, while he was at school, who lent him books by which he was convinced of the folly of idol worship. Aspiring to the study of English, the lad joined first one school and then another, and finally settled at the London Mission School at Belgaum.

There his knowledge of Christian truth increased, and his impressions of the uselessness of idolatry deepened; and his letters home to his parents showed signs of the change that was taking place in him, by frequent references to Christianity, which he contrasted with Hinduism to the disadvantage of the latter. •

Now Shiddhappa had a sister whom he tenderly loved, and as she was ill,—indeed, sick unto death,—the boy was called home to see her, with the hope that a change to his native village and a talk with his friends would lead his thoughts away from the new truths he had imbibed. However, the visit had the opposite effect, for the sight of his dying sister brought very vividly before his mind words he had heard concerning Christ and the life hereafter. The words were, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?” Shiddhappa felt that it would be good for all of them if they did believe the beautiful and comforting words.

Thereupon he spoke to his friends of his convictions, and intimated that on his return to Belgaum he would be baptised, and would cast in his lot with the followers of Christ. Great was the grief of his relatives at the announcement; and when entreaty proved of no avail in altering the young man’s decision, an uncle, more irascible than the rest, locked him up in a room in his house, and vowed that he should never leave it until he had promised to think no more of Christianity.

Shiddhappa bore all this ill-treatment with patience, but did not in the least waver in his resolution, and when a favourable opportunity presented itself he escaped from his stern relative's custody, and fled to Belgaum, where he rejoined the missionaries.

His mother, however, was soon upon his track. Leaving her dying daughter she hurried to the rescue, if possible, of her son, from what she conceived to be worse than death—viz., Christian baptism. The interview between mother and child was touching in the extreme. She pleaded passionately with her boy not to forsake the faith of his forefathers and bring disgrace upon the family name. She promised to let the lad have everything that his heart could wish in every other direction, if he would only renounce his intention of becoming a Christian. But the faith of Shiddhappa was fixed; and while he sought to soothe and comfort his mother with kind words, he yet let her know that all her arguments and pleading were in vain.

Then the sorrowful lady turned to the missionaries who were standing by and piteously exclaimed, "There are plenty of others who will join you, spare my son!" The missionaries, of course, told her that the decision lay entirely with her boy, but that they hoped he would be true to his love for Christ, as the change from Hinduism to Christianity could not be other than great gain, and was rather a matter for rejoicing than for sorrow.

To bring the painful interview to an end, Shiddhappa took some water from a Christian child, and at once broke caste by drinking it. "There, mother," he said,

"my caste is broken. You see that I am determined to follow my religious convictions." But even then the determined mother did not give up hope of success in her mission, for with a look of inexpressible sorrow in her face she exclaimed, "Do you think I shall leave you? No, not even for that!"

Eventually, however, the distressed lady saw that nothing could shake the faith of her son in Christianity; and then, though reluctantly, she left him with the missionaries, and returned almost broken-hearted to resume her care of her dying daughter.

Shiddhappa was baptised soon after. We can see, however, how terribly hard it must have been to the youth to run counter to the wishes of his parents, and give his dear mother such sorrow of spirit. Such a case helps us to understand those strange words of Christ, which read, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

The bitter opposition of the women of India to Christianity is a truth that is constantly being manifested in such scenes as that I have just recorded. Therefore the need for Zenana Missions is great. Lady missionaries are constantly in demand, who

will enter the homes of the people of India, and strike at the root of idolatry, the stronghold of Hinduism—the ignorance and bigotry of the women of the East.

Mrs. Hewlett of Benares, in an account of Zenana work in the sacred city of the Hindus, says: “A Brahmin lady here, whose son was anxious to become a Christian, and who is now a preacher of the Gospel, once said to him, falling down at his feet, with tears flowing down her cheeks, ‘Be assured that the moment you are baptised I shall shed my blood at the door of the missionary who will baptise you.’” The dreadful threat was not fulfilled, but it was meant at the time it was uttered; and there have been cases known of mothers doing themselves grievous bodily harm on the occasion of the baptism of a child. Tender-hearted sons, we may be sure, are much influenced by such threats, and it requires a great deal of courage to go steadily on in the path of Christian duty in the face of a mother’s tears, prayers, and hysterical pleadings.

Though females as a rule in India are very slow to declare themselves Christians, yet when they do so they are as brave as their husbands or brothers. I recall the case of a young person, who, about five years ago, was greatly persecuted for her faith at Kelayapuram in Quilon, South India. She was an orphan, living with and looking after the house of her only brother, who was a bigoted Hindu, and a hard-hearted, cruel man.

Kota was the name of the young woman. She made friends with some Christians living in the

district, and eventually, notwithstanding the threats of her brother, joined herself to a Christian Church. Then commenced a series of petty persecutions, which reached their climax one day in personal violence. Kota, on her return from service one Sunday, was seized by her brother, and severely beaten. Then, with a refinement of cruelty seldom witnessed, the poor girl was tied to a tree, at the foot of which was a flourishing colony of red ants.

In a little while Kota was completely covered with the insects, which bit her, and gave her great pain. When she cried out for pity, her brother only mocked her, and going up to her struck her savagely. Again the poor girl wept under the stings of the ants and the blows of her brother, and prayed aloud in her agony. "Yes, pray!" said her inhuman tormentor. "Call on Jesus and the catechist to come to your help!"

When Kota heard the name of her Lord thus taken in vain, she ceased her tears, remembering that she was a Christian, and that as such she must be prepared, in a heathen land, to suffer persecution. Not another cry did she raise; but with the courage of a martyr endured her aches and pains, until even the stony heart of her brother was touched, and after some hours of torment she was released by him with the remark that she was a brave girl, at any rate, though a foolish one for becoming a Christian.

Poor Kota! it was some time before she recovered from the physical effects of that day of ill-treatment. The trial, however, strengthened her faith and ennobled her character. Truly she was made perfect through suffering!

From South India let us journey in thought to the extreme North, and there, also, cases are constantly being reported of victory over weakness and fears, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In a report of work, which I once received from the Rev. H. Coley, now of London, but then of Almora, I find these words: "At Almora we have had the pleasure of baptising several persons during the past few weeks. One was an old woman, named Jasia, for many years *ayah* in Mr. Budden's household. She had received a good deal of instruction, and prayer on her behalf has been offered for many a year. Now, at last, in her old age, she has found faith and courage to confess Christ openly; and our hearts are glad.

"The next was Tulsi, a nice little maiden of about twelve years of age. She, too, had been under influence in the Bazaar Girls' School, and in joining our little Christian community followed the example of her sister, who was baptised from the same school in 1879.

"Another was a young man from a distant village. He had been hindered by the intervention of his relatives, and kept a close prisoner at home for some time. But he at last regained his liberty, and speedily made his way back to us. His mother came again in search of him. But his steadfast determination to seek a Saviour in Christ Jesus touched her heart. Though filled with wrath and indignation against us when she came, a great change took place. She quietly watched the ceremony, and, it is not improbable, may herself, before long, be seeking to join the same Master as her son. We thank God for these signs of His mighty

working, and would ask our friends to remember these 'little ones' in their prayers."

At Bankura in Bengal there was, two years ago, a most interesting case of baptism. It was that of a Brahmin youth named Kuloda. This young man attended the Wesleyan Mission High School, and one day during the Bible lesson the missionary found occasion to make some remarks on the gods of the Hindus. From what was said Kuloda was impressed with the idea that it was in vain to trust in idols for any good, and he began to inquire into religious matters, and to investigate the teaching of the New Testament with respect to Christ as the one and only Saviour of the human race.

The result was that the young man renounced Hinduism, and told his friends that he was about to be baptised. The usual persecutions followed, but did not damp the enthusiastic ardour of the young convert, who fixed Christmas Day for his public admittance, by the rite of baptism, into the Christian Church.

Notwithstanding the fierce opposition of friends, Kuloda forced his way to the Wesleyan Chapel; and there, amidst the rejoicing of God's people, he was baptised into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. When he returned home every effort was made to induce the young man to recant and go back to Hinduism, but he remained steadfast in the faith, saying that he could never deny the Lord Jesus who had died for him on the Cross of Calvary.

Baffled in their efforts to alter the decision of the brave youth, his friends vented their rage on the following day on the heads of the missionaries, whom

they stopped as they were driving through the town, and attacked with dust and stones and brickbats. However, no very great harm was done; and the missionaries have since had reason to believe that the things which were done against them have turned rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.

When in Calcutta I frequently met a native Christian gentleman called Atul Krishna Naj. It is over twenty years since he was baptised, but I refer to his case now because it is worthy of special notice in association with an event which happened comparatively recently.

When Atul Babu decided to become a Christian, he was taken into the house of that fine missionary, the late Rev. S. J. Hill of Berhampore, who, after a time, baptised the young man amidst a scene of great excitement. The whole neighbourhood was enraged at the event, for Atul was a youth of good parts. The anger of the parents, however, was the most intense, and the father banished the lad from home, and vowed that he would never look upon his face again.

Atul found the Scripture true which says, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." He obtained remunerative employment under Government, and made many kind friends amongst the Christians, but still it was a great grief to him to be at variance with his relatives, and he did all he could to soften their hearts towards him. After a few years his mother could bear the separation no longer, and sent for him to visit the house after dark. His father at such times either left the house or kept entirely out of sight. Thus for twenty long

years this unnatural state of things continued ; but at last, a while back, the father's heart relented and a complete reconciliation has been effected.

Let me tell the rest of the story in the words of the Rev. W. B. Phillips of Calcutta, an intimate friend of Atul Babu. Mr. Phillips says : " This morning Atul Babu and I met. It was a treat once more to shake hands, look each other in the face, and talk of the many associations that we have in common. A friendship spreading over fourteen years, cemented by loyalty to the same Lord, and marked by long co-operation in Christian work, affords many topics for happy converse.

" He was long the secretary of our Berhampore Total Abstinence Society. Just recently he has become secretary to a similar society started in Calcutta. He is also a teacher in the Sunday School. After talking freely for some time about various things, he suddenly said, ' I have a piece of good news for you.' ' Indeed ! what may that be ? ' ' My father has spoken to me.' As these words were uttered, and the full depth of their meaning grew upon him, his eyes filled with tears. All other thoughts were driven from my own mind, and I seemed to stand before the gathered emotions of twenty years.

" Here was one who, at the age of twenty-two, had said before God and man : ' I will follow Christ, whatever it may cost.' At the very threshold it had cost the bitterest grief of loving, indulgent parents ; it had raised a barrier which seemed to shut him off from them for ever. Years came and went ; his eldest child died ; others were born, grew up, and attended

school ; sickness, disappointment, and sadness blended with his life ; and yet through all the changes of time his father's heart never melted—no word of sympathy ever fell upon his ears.

“Twenty years ! what a long time it seems never to hear a word from the lips of a father living within a few hundred yards ! To have no smile of a grandfather on one's children ! No wonder that the tears stood in his eyes as he was able at last, after twenty years, to say : ‘My father has spoken to me.’ My own heart was much moved. I stood in the presence of one to whom ‘the Cross of Christ’ had meant such a bitterness as I had never known.”

Now let me give just another instance of youthful bravery for Christ's sake, which happened in Calcutta in 1891.

Lalit Kumar Ghose, a young Hindu of a thoughtful turn of mind, borrowed a copy of the Bible, about which he had heard much, to see for himself what the Christian Scriptures were. The Book was a revelation to him, and he speedily saw how superior was its teaching to anything that the Hindu Shasters contained. Thereupon he sought the companionship of Christians, and the guidance of missionaries, which coming to the ears of his friends, brought upon the young man much persecution. -

However, grace was given to him to bear meekly every trial, and on Sunday morning, August 23rd, 1891, he was baptised in Union Chapel—the church of which I was formerly minister. The service is said to have been a most impressive one, and was attended by many young people, who were deeply

affected by the outspokenness and bravery of the new convert.

In his short statement of belief addressed to the congregation, Lalit Kumar said, amongst other things: "I have implicit faith in the Christian religion. I believe Jesus to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who gave Himself for sinners. My hungry soul has been satisfied, my thirst has been quenched. Now I come forward to confess my Saviour publicly, by taking the external sign of baptism. I accept Jesus as my Saviour before everybody here, and I earnestly beseech you to pray that I may be kept in the faith to the last."

After his baptism the young man went to live with the missionaries of the London Missionary Society at Bhowanipore, where he carried on his studies in the Society's college, giving great satisfaction to his Christian friends. It was hoped that his relatives would leave him at peace, but no, they were only waiting a favourable opportunity to get him again into their power.

It happened one day that the new convert was out alone walking, and ere he was aware of their intentions his uncle and other relations seized him and carried him off, first to Gobra, and then to his home at Gouhati, where every pressure was brought to bear upon him to renounce Christianity.

The brave lad declined even to think of such a thing, and then insults and stripes were the portion of his cup, but he still held fast his integrity. He was kept a close prisoner for a time, but through the help of Mr. Burdett, a missionary living in the

district, he effected his escape. However, he was recaptured, and persecutions began afresh, but still he remained true to Christ ; and once more he effected his escape, and this time succeeded in reaching his friends at Bhowanipore, who received him with open arms. And there the young man has remained ever since, unmolested, his relatives evidently having given up the struggle in despair. This case shows how many and how great are the difficulties in the way of a young Hindu confessing his faith in Christ. All honour to such as Lalit Kumar Ghose, who have the courage of their beliefs !

Not all young men in India, however, are as brave as Lalit Kumar or Atul Babu, or the others I have mentioned. There are many who, though they have leanings towards Christianity and are convinced of the claims of Christianity upon them, yet have not the courage to forsake all for Christ's sake. More than one such case have I known myself. Again and again I have said to an anxious inquirer, "I am convinced that you are a Christian." "I am ! I am !" has been the reply, "but I dare not confess it to my friends. I fear persecution."

Let me plead with my young readers of the West for their sympathy and prayers on behalf of the young people of the East. The advent of that day is earnestly to be desired when all the world over young men and maidens will be able to say, "We fear God : but we have no other fear !"

THE END.

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